

THE ETHICS OF BIRTH  
CONTROL



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# THE ETHICS OF BIRTH CONTROL

*Being the Report of the Special Committee appointed  
by the National Council of Public Morals in  
connection with the investigations of  
the National Birth rate  
Commission*

PRESIDENT  
THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

GENERAL SECRETARY  
SIR JAMES MARCHANT, K.B.E., LL.D

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# INTRODUCTION

BY THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

As President of the National Council of Public Morals, and separating myself for the moment from the Committee responsible for this Report, I venture to express the hope that it will not be found unworthy of a place beside the Reports already issued by the Council. These Reports are monuments of the knowledge, experience, and powers of patient investigation of the many persons who from time to time have responded to the call of the Council and willingly given their services.

As the public knows, the Council exists to focus the judgments of those who are most competent to give them on the moral side of some of the tendencies and movements which affect the welfare of our nation and Empire. In this Report the Council had in view the large number of persons, conscientious and anxious to do the right, who have been asking for

guidance. It is indeed characteristic of the times, and a characteristic which many will deeply regret, that such a subject should be thus openly discussed. In large measure the Committee share that regret, but they have felt that whatever help to right thinking and right action they are able to give should not *on this account be withheld*. Neither the Council nor the Committee responsible for the Report have had in view those whose minds are made up. They have rather tried to visualise and sympathise with the difficulties of those younger married persons of all classes with whom of necessity lies the responsibility for the next generation. Said a young Fellow of a Cambridge College, speaking on behalf of youth at the Church Congress lately held at Oxford, "We are directly and deeply suspicious that the Church is being run by the middle-aged for the benefit of the middle-aged." The Committee has been anxious not to deserve such a suspicion, but, realising the evident seriousness of so many of the young men and women often designated "modern-minded," it has sought to put before them principles on which wise conclusions may be based. It has been, as we all are, fully aware of the fact that (to quote the youthful speaker already alluded to) "This generation

has very little respect for authority," and accordingly it has made its appeal not to regulations, however venerable, promulgated in the past, but to that thought and reason which, working on a religious foundation, is looking for the truth and nothing but the truth, both in opinion and action.

The Committee claims neither infallibility nor permanence for its conclusions. Its hope is that, coming to the subject as it did with an open mind, presupposing the religious attitude indicated in the Report, it may have been able to contribute at least an "interim ethic" both to those who are faced with urgent practical problems in married life and those who, looking at the subject from a more detached standpoint, are only anxious for the ultimate welfare of the nation to which they belong.

In conclusion I desire to express the deep gratitude of the Council to the members of the Committee who contributed not merely many hours of their time to the investigation, but spared neither pains nor trouble in their task.

Nor are we less grateful—and here I speak for both the Council and the Committee—to those witnesses who were good enough to attend personally to help the Committee, and

whose valuable evidence is published in this volume.

Finally, though it goes without saying, both Council and Committee are indebted in more ways than can be mentioned to their indefatigable Secretary, Sir James Marchant.

THEODORE WINTON :



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## PREFATORY NOTE

THE National Council of Public Morals, which has for its objects the promotion of the moral and physical regeneration of the race, established in 1913, with official recognition, what became known as the National Birth rate Commission. The Commission was composed of sixty recognised authorities in religion, science, statistics, economics, and education, it took evidence from a large number of experts, and in 1916 presented its first Report to the late Lord Long, then President of the Local Government Board, who said on receiving the Commission—

“ My first duty, and a very great privilege it is, is, on behalf of the Government and on behalf—may I for a moment voice something much wider and much larger than the Government?—on behalf of *society and the country*, to thank your Commission for the splendid work which you have done. I am confident that if you have done nothing else, and I think you have done a great deal more, you have stirred the minds and hearts of men and women in so profound a way that even the most careless, the most indifferent cannot be deaf to your entreaties or regardless of your suggestions. If the need for work of this kind were great before, it is ten times greater now that this war has come. I hope that the important remark made to us a moment ago may be appreciated by the people of this nation throughout its length and breadth—namely that

true patriotism and true devotion to public service are not to be found merely in the performance of those splendid feats of arms which have won the gratitude of our hearts and which have won our undying admiration, but they are also to be found in those quieter, less glorious, but none the less valuable services which we can, if we will, in our time and generation render to the State "

Now, in that Report<sup>1</sup> the question of family restriction was put before the Commission at considerable length by expert witnesses and their evidence and examination were published in full. The Report was extensively reviewed in the Press of Great and Greater Britain, America and in most Continental countries, and aroused great interest in the Churches. It went out practically to the ends of the earth. One typical review may be quoted. *The New Statesman* (Dr Sidney Webb) said that "The National Council of Public Morals has done a great public service. The Commission has produced the most candid, the most outspoken, and the most impartial statement that this country has yet had as to the extent, the nature, and the ethical character of the voluntary regulation of the marriage state which now prevails over the greater part of the civilised world." In that Report there was a special section dealing with the moral and religious aspects of Birth Control and the views of representative members of the Established Church, the Catholic Church, the Free Churches and the Jewish community were published. In an "addendum" to the Report drawn up by the Rev Principal A. E. Garvie, D.D., and signed by twenty four of the members of the Commission, it was urged that—

<sup>1</sup> Published under the title of *The Declining Birth Rate its Causes and Effects*

"The following are some of the questions which deserve more thorough and general consideration than we have been able to give to them —

(1) Is parenthood the only valid reason for marital relations?

(2) What motives justify the restriction of the family?

(3) Is any mode of restriction except voluntary abstinence from marital relations moral and religious?

(4) How would such voluntary abstinence affect the health, comfort, and happiness of the relations of husband and wife?"

From the issue of that Report, the National Council has been more or less the centre of organised investigation into the various aspects of the complex problem of Birth Control. And various members of the Commission—amongst whom were Sir Arthur Newsholme (then the Principal Medical Officer of the Local Government Board, who with Dr T C Stevenson, the Superintendent of Statistics, were appointed by their respective Government departments to serve on the Commission), Dr Mary Scharlieb, Lady Barrett, and others—armed with the expert information gained at its board, have written books on the subject which have still further aroused public opinion upon this urgent and almost world wide problem.

The Commission was reconstituted in 1917, and devoted three more years to further investigation into problems of population and parenthood, and in 1920 presented its second Report to the Rt Hon C Addison M P, then Minister of Health. This further Report occupied a volume of 450 pages, and had a very large circulation, and also dealt with the problem of Birth Control. Again in 1921 the

National Council appointed, as the Ministry of Health decided it would be better to have an independent inquiry, a special Committee on "The Prevention of Venereal Disease" with a view to bringing together the divided forces attacking these dire evils. The subject of Birth Control came again into the discussion of these vital matters. And later in 1921 the National Council reconstituted the Commission a third time to deal with a further problem of the "Development and Education of Young Citizens for Worthy Parenthood," and its third Report, under the title of "Youth and the Race," a volume of 378 pages, was presented to the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education jointly. During the third investigation we were, as before, brought up against the recurring question of Birth Control, and in particular we were urged on all sides to follow up the work of our first Commission and to give some guidance to Christian people who were sorely perplexed about their duty and responsibility in this regard. The National Council accordingly appointed, in continuation of its previous investigation a special Committee "to consider the Ethical Aspects of Birth Control from the point of view of Christian people." The President of the National Council the Lord Bishop of Winchester, who, as Bishop of Peterborough, had served on the previous Commission, became the President of this Birth Control Committee. A list of the members of the Committee is given on p. xvi.

The Committee has held fourteen meetings in London, and met for one week end at Farnham Castle. It has had the benefit of statements and evidence from Lord Dawson of Penn. Rt. Rev. Bishop Gore the Lord Bishop of Guildford, Professor P. Carnegie Simpson D.D., the Hon. Bertrand Russell F.R.S., Sir William Beveridge, K.C.B., Mr. Harold Cox, Lady Barrett M.D., Miss Maude

Royden, Dr Dunlop The evidence of these various witnesses, to whom the Committee has been greatly indebted, follows the Report and the Notes of Reservation which are here published, together with a note on the "History of the Use of Contraceptives" kindly drawn up for the Report by Professor W F Lofthouse, D D

In our previous Reports we have stated the limits of the responsibility of the members and ourselves in making these investigations and in publishing the various Reports, and we cannot do better than quote our own words again—

"The members of the Committee who have signed this Report are to be considered to have expressed their general agreement with its conclusions, without necessarily asserting their unanimity in every detail"

"The Council left the members free in every way to pursue their inquiries, and the Report is now presented to the public without alteration by the Council The Committee is alone responsible for its Report"

At the same time as this Report is being published, the National Council is also issuing the Report of three years' scientific psychological investigation into the educational value of the Cinematograph, following its earlier inquiry into the physical and moral effects of the Cinematograph upon young people

In this, as in other ways, the National Council of Public Morals which is a voluntary body dependent upon charitable contributions hopes to continue its efforts to serve the Nation the Empire, and the Race

JAMES MARCHANT

# Members of the Birth Control Committee

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*President :*

THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

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(*Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of England*).

MRS. GEORGE CADBURY  
(*President of the National Free Church Council*).

MRS. JOHN CLAY  
(*Representing the Mothers' Union*).

SIR HERMANN GOLLANCZ, D.Lit.  
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(*Secretary*)



# THE ETHICS OF BIRTH CONTROL

## PART I

### THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

#### THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY

THE task with which we were entrusted by the National Council of Public Morals was to examine the problem of Birth Control,<sup>1</sup> or, to speak more accurately, Conception Control,<sup>2</sup> from the moral and religious point of view. Obviously it is impossible to exclude other aspects · indeed, on a large interpretation of “moral and religious,” and in view of the vital nature of the subject, there are few considerations which do not come under that category. To those who expect a final pronouncement, or absolute directions which will save them the trouble of thought, the results of our inquiry will be disappointing. No one who is interested in these matters can escape the responsibility of forming his own judgment. Our hope is that we may afford

<sup>1</sup> *Limitation of the family by any means.*

<sup>2</sup> *Use of mechanical or chemical means*

## 2 ETHICS OF BIRTH CONTROL

some guidance to those—and they must be many—who find themselves confronted with a problem in which they are, as individuals, intimately concerned, and in which is also involved the existence and prosperity of the race. That such guidance is both desired and needed is the reason for the appearance of this Report.

In this inquiry we have concerned ourselves solely with the ethics of Birth Control within the married state. Yet it is impossible to avoid reference to the reactions which its practice within those limits has set up elsewhere. In like manner the economic, and in particular the medical, aspects of the matter have necessarily been taken account of in our investigation, though from our standpoint these are not primary. There is, we believe, a strong case for a much more extended investigation, particularly from the medical side, than has yet been made.

Before we proceed to deal with the ethics of the problem of Birth Control there are certain other factors in our modern situation to which attention may be called. One is the widespread impatience of authority as such. Theological principles and ecclesiastical pronouncements are far from being divorced from reason or reality,<sup>1</sup> but they are often *assumed to be so, and no judgment on this question which is open to that suspicion will*

<sup>1</sup> As would be plain, for example, from a perusal of the Report of the Lambeth Conference of 1920

carry much weight. But the revolt against authority has gone further. The whole basis of marriage is now called in question. Prostitution is deprecated mainly on the ground that the commercialising of the female is the most revolting form of male domination, yet irregular sexual relations are admitted provided that they are maintained on a basis of free comradeship. This latter type of sexual relationship is perhaps as menacing to the well-being of society in these days as prostitution itself. It is precisely the possibility of these relations without fear of untoward consequences<sup>1</sup> which contraceptive methods have now made practicable, and this "new morality" is even put forward in certain quarters as a remedy for the evil of prostitution. Further, the urgency of the subject is due in no small measure to the unnatural and even deplorable conditions, social and industrial, in which many people spend their lives and make their homes. We shall have more to say on this point later.

We have to face the fact that the practice of contraception has become widespread before there has been time to think out its implications, ethical or economic. This large extension of the practice began less than fifty years ago. "In Europe as a whole, excluding Russia, the fall in fertility from 1881 to 1911 was in the neighbourhood of 20%. In

<sup>1</sup> In this connection, however, the risk of venereal disease must not be forgotten

particular countries it varied from nothing, as in Ireland, to more than 40% in Saxony"<sup>1</sup> Sir William Beveridge asserts that "these two characteristics of generality and diversity practically exclude any explanation of the fall other than the deliberate prevention of fertilisation" "No general change of economic conditions," he proceeds, "which could in any way increase the need for restriction of families can be traced as having occurred at the time. The year 1880 falls in the middle of a period of industrial expansion during which prosperity and the standard of living rose continuously in most if not all the countries concerned. It must be inferred that the sudden development of Birth Control<sup>2</sup> at that particular date was due, not to any increase in the need for control, but to improvements in the means of control, to the invention and exploitation of new powers over nature, like those given by chloroform or gunpowder, but unlike them in being driven underground by public opinion and the law"

## THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

### 1 *The Religious Outlook*

In our Report a Christian outlook is assumed<sup>3</sup> It is well, perhaps, at the outset,

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Wm. Beveridge's evidence p. "1

<sup>2</sup> By contraceptive methods.

<sup>3</sup> Though one of our number is a distinguished teacher of the Hebrew faith he is sympathetically aware that the outlook of the other members of the Commission is specifically Christian.

to indicate something of what this involves. It means that life is lived with a background of eternity—that the formation of character concerns our future as well as our present existence, that self gratification is not the true purpose of life, that life finds its fulfilment in service and sacrifice for greater than personal ends, that, for the Christian, spiritual reinforcements are available where ordinary moral resources may be insufficient, that such spiritual help can be relied upon by those united in Christian wedlock, and that the family is a Divine institution.

This plain statement of our point of view will, it is hoped, serve to correct some misapprehensions of the nature of our inquiry, and possibly to forestall some criticisms. This attitude, in our judgment, involves the obligation to seek light from any available quarter, and we have had the benefit, both from within and without the Commission, of receiving valuable information, medical and economic, from persons eminently qualified to give it.

## 2 *The Nature of Married Life*

We look upon married life as a natural relationship, not merely as a legal or social contract, as natural as the relationship of parent and child, or sister and brother, precisely because it is the foundation of them all, and all the more so because, unlike the

relationships referred to, it is entered into voluntarily and deliberately. From this follows the naturalness of intercourse as its consummation—"They two shall be one flesh." Further, intercourse is inevitably connected with parenthood; children are the crown and climax of wedlock. This, so far from being a "low" view of the primary purpose of marriage, is the very opposite, for it means sharing in the Divine activity of creation. Further, we believe that married life, like other spheres of life, social and personal, can only attain its true end through discipline and self-sacrifice; that these are essentials of love; and that a home in which parents and children share this discipline is the nearest approach to the ideal of social happiness which is to be found in mankind.

### *3. The Responsibility of Parenthood.*

By a universal instinct mankind has accorded to parenthood a unique dignity. And rightly so, for this particular human activity stands in a category by itself, in that it involves the continuity of the species with all its accumulated gifts, capacities, experiences and hopes. Each generation is a trustee for the future of the race. There is therefore a public interest in every marriage. "None of us liveth unto himself," whether married or single. So far from that, if it be true—and Christian philosophy can hardly think otherwise—that the world was created

primarily for personalities and the development of personality, then married people have, under sanction of society and religion, the inestimable privilege of adding to the number of spiritual beings capable of growing a character like God's as they are originally "made in His image" And such characters are, it goes without saying, the supreme wealth of the State as they are the glory of the family.

We desire therefore at the outset to emphasise the duty of adequate parenthood By this we mean that, normally, each couple should look forward to a family of four or five children at the least It is easy to criticise the very large families of Victorian days, but there can be little doubt that in hundreds of cases, where the economic circumstances were tolerable—though often not more than tolerable—they secured a character-training for both parents and children which was a national asset, and which we of this generation should be the last to decry We believe that the frequency of too rapid child bearing and of excessively large families has been much exaggerated in current publications Such cases, though numerous, are not in the majority even when no measures of Birth Control are adopted Accordingly we deplore as strongly as possible the tendency—in some cases a mere fashion, in others a necessity more imaginary than real, in others again, a selfishness more or less plausibly concealed—

to look on one or two or even three children as the sufficient fulfilment of a function whose far-reaching potency and value it is impossible to exaggerate. Indeed the intrusion into this sacred function of any merely selfish motive is a grave misuse of the creative function with which man has been endowed.

#### 4. *The Rights of Womanhood.*

No such brief statement of principles as this can be complete without mention of the rights of womanhood. This assertion is a truism, yet until comparatively recent times a married woman has too frequently been regarded as a chattel of her husband, to be at his disposal, especially where matters of sex are concerned. No behaviour can be tolerated, in a Christian view, which regards woman as a means to the pleasure, or the sex-impulse, of her husband, irrespective of her own healthy desires or her position. Every woman, as a personality, is an end in herself, and the rights, purposes, pleasures, sacrifices, of married life must be mutual.

#### 5. *The Value of the Child.*

Equally evident and equally important, are the claims of the child. This is emphasised on all hands in our own day, and is the motive power behind the growing interest in education, and behind the wholly admirable desire of parents to secure for their children



an environment and an upbringing which will conduce to the highest development of character and capacity. Increasingly is it recognised that healthy children, properly trained, are the nation's most valuable asset. The intention, therefore, on the part of parents to contribute to the state as many children as is consonant with their adequate upbringing and training both in body and mind is in accordance with the highest duty of patriotism and is worthy of that care, energy, self-denial, and sacrifice which is demanded and given in other fields of patriotic enterprise.

To us the above seem to be the bedrock principles upon which any useful consideration of the problem of conception control must be based, and by which all questions as to the permissibility of any methods of conception control must be decided.

## THE PRACTICE OF BIRTH CONTROL

In the present day, conception control is advocated and practised very widely, in our own and in other countries. It is a comparatively modern development,<sup>1</sup> and we must now attempt to state the main reasons which in our judgment have led to its wide diffusion. To classify these reasons is, however, very difficult, since they differ greatly in

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, p 31

character, and many persons are influenced by more than one at the same time. It must also be remembered that the question is one which does not arise simply from the desire to prevent conception altogether, but to prevent, it may be, the birth of more than a certain number of children, or to secure some desired interval or "spacing" between the several births. We are also dealing in this report, it must be remembered, with the practice within the marriage bond. This being understood, we proceed to classify the main reasons as follows:—

### 1. *Educational and Domestic.*

It is certain that many cases of birth control are due to the fact that parents, and especially parents of limited means, are unwilling to have children unless they can be adequately cared for and properly educated. This is due to that deepened sense of the preciousness of child life to which we have already referred. We have sympathy for persons in straitened circumstances who resort to contraceptive methods, not as a means for self-indulgence, but in their fear of the grave difficulties in bringing up even a moderate family. At the same time, it must be remembered that many parents who are not faced by these difficulties have an exaggerated notion of the best means of attaining their ideal of education. At a time when the greater part of the population leaves school at the age of fourteen it seems

hardly reasonable for people in another social class to assume that an education in public school and university is essential, and that unless such an education, or its equivalent, can be assured the births must be reduced. Nor is it wise to forget that the very fact of being a member of a fairly large family, say, of anything over four children, itself enhances a child's preparation for life as much as the fact of being an only child, or one of two children, hinders it. Playmates in the nursery are more important than the parents' ease. We may hazard the conjecture that the world's best men and women have more often than not been members of large families, and that the discipline therein involved was no small part of the secret of their success. Further, we cannot doubt that the self-discipline needed in a home of moderate means for bringing up a family of four or five or more is a far greater asset both to the family and to the community than the comparative comfort which may result from a further reduction in the number of children.

## 2 *Medical*

The most serious aspect of this question is that which regards the health of the mothers. Evidence is forthcoming from many quarters that many women lead lives of weariness, of ill-health, and even of misery, owing to their too frequent conceptions. This aspect of the matter calls for both sympathy and action.

On the other hand, ill-health in married life is a not infrequent consequence of interference with the normal function of child-bearing. There is evidence to prove that several healthy pregnancies increase a woman's mental and physical well-being. We should contemplate with sympathy any plan by which wise ethical and medical advice could be given by qualified persons to those whose circumstances deprive them of the similar facilities which are open to the well-to-do. Such advice would not necessarily be the imparting of information as to the use of contraceptives. And in many cases the husband rather than the wife needs warning and instruction. But such cases are in our view exceptions—however numerous—to the ideal which we sought to describe and which ought to be the normal rule of married life. The possibly large number of such exceptions is the measure of the degree in which, owing to modern artificial conditions of life, a normal healthy married life has become unattainable for many persons. We believe none the less that the remedy lies not in the hasty extension of a relief which is itself as artificial as the circumstances which demand it, but in more drastic and more widespread measures of social reform. Nor can we altogether ignore the fact that the medical view may be unconsciously biased in favour of conception control, for advice is *ex hypothesi* likely to be asked for mainly in exceptional

cases, and the vast number of cases where no interference with nature is necessary or desired pass unnoticed

### 3 *Economic*

Still another aspect of this responsibility of parenthood is one which besets us on every hand and to which allusion has already been made, namely, the difficulty of modern economic conditions of life. This is familiar enough. High cost of living, which often leads to marriages being delayed or only contemplated with deliberate birth restriction in view, the widespread difficulty of securing adequate house room, forcing many couples to consider, not only the possibility of marrying at all, but also the size of the family which can or cannot be accommodated. Then there is the fact that the less some measure of control seems necessary the more it appears to be practised. In this respect a contrast is constantly pointed between those groups which, from the economic point of view, are at the opposite ends of the scale. There is, none the less, a good deal of exaggeration in regard to this comparison. 'There is no solid evidence of an increase in the number of those who can be described as unfit. There is no evidence of a decline in the average physique of the people in spite of growing urbanisation. The evidence from the lengthening expectation of life and the decline of individual mortality is all the other way.' This, however, does

not alter the fact that "those classes in each generation which by economic standards are most valuable to the community in the present day on the whole contribute less than their fair share to the next generation."<sup>1</sup> We are aware, indeed, that the economic standard is not the only nor the chief standard of life, but the fact remains that in numbers of homes where provision could be made for an entirely adequate upbringing of children, the nursery is either tenantless or not nearly so well filled as it ought to be. Conversely, in circumstances where it is most difficult to bring up a large family, though the value of the home from the point of view of character may be as great, or greater, the family is not infrequently too large for its adequate training, and grows up in surroundings which in themselves cannot make for health. The perplexing question of income and wages is, of course, deeply involved. It is obvious that the size of the family must, if any prudence is to be observed, be regulated according to the financial resources available, and these in scores of cases are slender enough.

In view of all this, it is not surprising that people have had recourse to conception control, many of whom have the highest ideals of married life and a full sense of parental responsibility. Apart from the question of methods—with which up to this point we

<sup>1</sup> Sir Wm. Beveridge, p. 170

have not been concerned—such action is seen to be in many cases advisable and even necessary.

## METHODS OF BIRTH CONTROL

### 1. *Self-control.*

Before any reference is made to other methods of conception control and the arguments which can be urged for and against them, we must consider the possibility and value of self-control. By this term we mean the complete abstinence from intercourse throughout those periods of marriage when, for one reason or another, conception is not desired.

While we do not deny that the conditions of life for many married persons are abnormal, particularly in regard to housing, we believe that for the majority of parents who, while they have no desire unduly to restrict the number of their children, are compelled to keep their families within what may be called workable limits, self-control, as defined above, is not so impossible as often it is alleged to be. Its feasibility in such cases—probably indeed in all cases—is, we believe, gravely underrated. It is, in our judgment, the ideal method of birth control. That this is in certain quarters denied is due partly to the effect of centuries of laxity. It has long been widely supposed, for instance, that whatever may be said of the need for self-control before

marriage, there is little or no need afterwards, in fact, that it cannot rightly be demanded. Obviously, with the easy alternative provided by mechanical methods, temptation to deny its adequacy is immensely strengthened.

Broadly speaking, our generation is too much occupied with problems of sex to see calmly and clearly. This is due in part to reactions—some of them very healthy—from Victorian conventions, in part to the new interest in sex from the psychological standpoint, and in part to the fundamental change of attitude as to women's position and work which the last half-century has seen. The use of contraceptives would seem to imply that self-control in marriage is impossible. Yet we expect continence of unmarried men and women, and in innumerable cases the expectation is fulfilled. It may be urged that the intimacies of the married state make this argument less applicable to married persons. We must not forget that to a Christian the natural relationship of marriage carries with it, like all other human relationships, the grace to use it rightly, that the joint enterprise of self control (if undertaken in a religious spirit) by husband and wife may be a means of cementing rather than detracting from their union. Yet we have to deal with large numbers of persons who, having little self control in early life, find themselves confronted with one of the gravest tests of character in marriage, and, finding their



resources (owing to bad early training) wholly inadequate, turn round and demand that mechanical measures shall supply what they could and should have supplied themselves if their characters had been properly developed. In these cases, as also in many others where no such lack of early training can be alleged, the strain involved in self-control is grave indeed. The call is urgent for both sympathy and action, and that action, we submit, will best take the form, not of an abandonment of the struggle and an increased reliance on contraceptives, but of a reform of those very circumstances, and of a more definite appreciation of the aids that are available, both physical and moral.

There are hygienic as well as moral aids to self-control which are available. We have already spoken of early training in character. Regular exercise, hard work, and plain living are obviously of vital importance. An excessive meat diet often makes continence more difficult, and still more is this the case with alcohol, even when strict moderation is not exceeded. The amelioration of unfavourable social conditions, especially in regard to housing, combined with an increased sense of responsibility on the part of each individual member of the community, will help in the same direction.

This leads us to emphasise that not the least of the reforms which are urgently needed is the deliberate inculcation in boys and girls,

both at school and at home, of habits of discipline and control; and further, that there should be a much more careful preparation of young people for marriage, its duties, and responsibilities. The parents themselves are, of course, primarily responsible for this, but much more could be done than is done by the Churches in the preparation for full membership, whether it be Confirmation or some other analogous practice. There is here a unique opportunity for careful and systematic teaching as to Christian ideals of marriage and family life, an opportunity which is most inadequately used. In our judgment, a grave responsibility lies upon the authorities of the Churches to revise their whole treatment of adolescence from this point of view. They should ensure that their younger members enter on the responsibilities of adult life equipped with Christian principles, and thereby with an adequate sense of their duty to the community alike as regards the family and the nation. As things are, in too many cases young people do not understand the many-sided implications of social life, and particularly of love and marriage. They enter into a state which brings some of the sternest tests of character, and which links them up with the creative purpose of God Himself, often with no preparation of thought or knowledge or discipline. Knowledge they may have, but it is often inadequate, partial, and sometimes perniciously obtained.

They should be taught that the Christian point of view carries with it the conviction that in married life as in other spheres of character growing there are resources available which make a high level of discipline, control, achievement, both possible and normal to men and women who can respond to higher things. It is true that many who would call themselves Christians seem hardly to have discovered this fact, but this is merely to say that much of the Christianity of the present day is hardly more than nominal.

## 2 *Contraceptives*

We have now to consider the practice of conception control by the use of the chemical or mechanical appliances known as contraceptives. In doing so, we have in mind at once those persons who wish to avoid the burden and responsibility of parenthood, for whatever reasons, altogether, and those who, without wishing to do this, or even because they wish to discharge those responsibilities in the best possible fashion, feel that the necessary self control places too great a strain upon them.

As in all other instances of the control of nature by man the ethical question arises not in the methods themselves but in the motives by which their use or non use is determined. If married people, in full view of the principles already enunciated, decide that the use of

contraceptives is for them justified, we do not condemn them. There may be cases, we fully grant, where—especially under medical advice—their use is inevitable. In any case we do not feel able to condemn them on the ground of their being (as it is alleged) “unnatural,” for this would seem to beg the question at issue. Civilisation itself has been the story of man’s control over nature mainly by mechanical means, and while it is true that to many minds these methods are “unnatural” and even abhorrent, this is not an argument likely to be convincing to those who most need help and who have overcome, or can easily overcome, whatever repugnance they might have felt. The argument for hesitation in beginning any such practice needs to be based on motive and principle rather than on the alleged evil *per se* of the methods in question. None the less, we regard all these cases as abnormal in the sense that in them an artificial attempt is made to meet artificial conditions of life. Further, no decision to use them should be made without the fullest consideration of the principles which we have stated. It is a fact not lightly to be set aside that the marriage relationship and all that leads up to it has among all races and in all ages been closely connected with religious customs, mysteries, rites. This itself indicates that throughout the world and at all times the principles controlling it have been deemed to go deep into eternal realities.

It is certain that religious sanction has always been forthcoming for the view that intercourse and procreation have been by nature inseparably conjoined. Yet the term "inseparably" needs modification. For it is beyond doubt that not every act of intercourse is inevitably followed by conception, and further that religious approval has never been withheld from intercourse during the few days of the so-called "safe period," when it is indulged with the deliberate hope and intention that no conception will follow. Indeed, this raises a question which is intimately connected with the religious aspect of the matter, namely, the legitimacy or otherwise of disconnecting the physical act characteristic of marriage from its usual and natural consequences in procreation. Obviously in many cases, where, owing to age or infirmity, there is no possibility of children, the act is so disconnected, and in such circumstances no one questions its propriety or even its necessity as essential to the married state. And this introduces a consideration of the first importance, namely, that the physical act may rightly be regarded as creating, expressing, and cementing the marital relation apart from its consequences in the procreation of children. That this is both reasonable and reverent is clear from the cases quoted above in which that is its sole function. Some would speak of the act as in this sense sacramental—the outward and

tangible sign of the love which it at once consummates and typifies. Further, it is obvious that this is one of its main functions even where conception is possible and desired. If so, it is difficult to condemn those who, where the grave considerations already mentioned have been faced, that is, where the paramount duty of adequate parenthood has been recognised and met, regard this particular function as one which may be legitimately isolated and emphasised. Yet, having said this, we at once add that further investigation, both on the ethical and medical side, is needed here. For there can be no doubt that the use of contraceptives, where the duty of adequate parenthood is not fully met, is contrary to the purpose and inimical to the continued integrity of the family. It is true that the ethical judgment must depend less on the methods used than on the motives and circumstances of each particular case, but among these circumstances there are some of a general kind which cannot be ignored. It is obvious that this deliberate disconnection by mechanical means between intercourse and its usual result is a new thing in the history of the human race. It makes a revolution, only comparable in the magnitude of its effects to the discovery of steam or gunpowder. It may result—in France it has almost certainly resulted—in an undue restriction of population. It may easily lead to an over-development of the

sensual and selfish side of sexual life at the expense of its social and spiritual side, and therefore of the ultimate interests of the community. Apart from the considerations urged in this Report, it can hardly fail to weaken that stimulus to effort and discipline by which alone man's struggle with circumstances can be won.

We would emphasize our unanimous agreement as to the fundamental importance of the practice of self-control in the sexual relations of married life. When, however, restriction of frequency of pregnancy is desired, there is a large body of evidence that, as an alternative to complete abstinence over prolonged periods, strict limitation of sexual relations to four or five days in the middle of the intermenstrual period does diminish the risk of pregnancy.<sup>1</sup> The adoption of this alternative to complete abstinence necessarily still implies a large measure of self-control. The absence of exact knowledge as to the physiological conditions under which fertilisation occurs makes it necessary to be cautious in expressing conclusions as to the "safe period," though there is important evidence of its safety when strictly observed. It should be added that there is no known contraceptive method which does not sometimes fail to achieve its object, and that contra-

<sup>1</sup> Further investigation in regard to the safe period is needed. Evidence as to its failure is less convincing and exact than the strong evidence as to its success.

ceptive measures as commonly used may involve grave risk to health.

Moreover, the reactions of the practice of contraception have already been far-reaching, and will be more, so; for the use of contraceptives, even in cases where the motives and character of the users are beyond reproach, must needs exercise an influence among those *who do not accept these high ideals, and whose sole anxiety is to find an excuse or an example by which their own ready rejection of self-denial and self-control may be justified.* Outside the married state the situation would seem to be perilous. For now, for the first time in history, it has become widely known that with a fair degree of probability it is possible to secure the pleasure of the sexual act without any risk of consequences, a risk which has had a markedly deterrent effect in every age, and which has therefore been a strong buttress of self-control. There is, in fact, a close connection which cannot be ignored between the problem of conception control and that of the prevention of sexual promiscuity. Sexual promiscuity is the root evil from which arise syphilis and gonorrhœa, two diseases which cause more human disablement and premature death than perhaps any other single disease.

To sum up :

We desire to state that in our judgment—

1. The comparatively modern practice of



conception control, and in particular the artificial methods used, call for a much fuller investigation than it has hitherto received from the medical, economic, and religious standpoints

2 The use of contraceptives is a symptom of the artificial character of our civilisation whereby for large numbers of people a simple, healthy, normal married life is difficult, and in some cases all but impossible

3 There are numerous cases in which control of conception, considered in itself and apart from the question of the methods employed, is medically necessary and economically advisable, but in every such case all the circumstances should be weighed in the light of the best available scientific and ethical counsel

4 The ideal method of birth control is self control <sup>1</sup> Such self-control must be agreed upon by husband and wife and be carried out in a spirit of service and sacrifice Therefore so far from giving any general approval to the use of contraceptives, the line of real advance lies in a deeper reverence, a return to greater simplicity of life, and not least, a drastic reformation of our social and economic conditions

5 In married life intercourse fulfils other functions besides procreation, but, while there are persons approaching the matter

<sup>1</sup> Involving as indicated above abstinence over definite periods of time

from the highest motives in whose judgment the use of contraceptives is justifiable, the deliberate disconnection by mechanical means of sexual satisfaction and its natural result opens the door to grave social perils, and a serious responsibility therefore lies upon the conscience of married people who adopt this practice.

6. Our knowledge is not such as to justify either the advocacy or the condemnation of these means on the ground of alleged dangers of over-population: but, on the contrary, within the British Empire the time is ripe for a campaign of empire-settlement and redistribution of population on a scheme carefully thought out and on an adequate scale in view of the disparity of population in the different countries concerned.

7. The weightiest argument for birth control is found in the economic circumstances (wages, grossly inadequate housing, and the like) of many persons. While in many instances birth control by contraceptives may be the lesser of two evils, the ultimate remedy lies in the amelioration of those conditions.

8. The capacities for self-control, especially in young people, are often underrated, and their training in this respect, as also in the ideals of married life, is a primary duty of all who are responsible for their education and upbringing.

The problem is grave and complex. In dealing with it, we have deemed it our duty not to assert any preconceived notions, but to examine the various conceptions which are held on the subject in the light of reason and religion, so as to help those who seek guidance to reach right conclusions. We recognise that there are certain cases, especially where husband and wife are not at one in the matter, where the use of contraceptive methods seems the only way of avoiding great and entirely undeserved suffering, and we also recognise that there are many who, especially in the economic conditions of the time, seem bound to choose between the use of such methods, the curtailment of their married intimacy, and an undesirably large family. But, remembering that we are speaking primarily to persons who admit the claims of a religion which both demands self forgetting devotion from its members and grants the power to achieve it, we would urge finally that the interests of the home and the family must be supreme. In the home and the family the best and deepest things of life find their natural centre and their most congenial sphere. Any want of soundness there reacts on the nation and on circles wider still. Any selfishness, however well concealed or plausibly excused, depresses that bracing atmosphere of discipline and service without which no social group, domestic or otherwise, can flourish. What is above all necessary is the encourage

ment of a full, happy, and healthy home life for all sections of the community. Where love sets the standard of duty and provides the motive for its attainment, there and there alone can be seen in their true significance and in their ultimate bearing problems such as that with which we have been concerned. To this, every conviction as to the permissibility or the reverse of the use of any methods whatever must be subordinated.

Lastly, for the Christian, both worlds are interested in each infant life—earth in the potential citizen, Heaven in the potential saint. This last statement needs no proof to those who believe in the Incarnation, and who find in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, particularly in regard to the family and the children, alike their standard and their inspiration. These considerations, so far from being visionary, will be found to be of the greatest value as a steadying and uplifting influence in that conflict of impulses and desires, hopes and fears, which is involved in married life, for only in the light of them can the true and abiding ends of marriage be attained.

THEODORE WINTON: (*President*).

ALFRED E. GARVIE.

ELIZ. M. CADBURY.

R. C. GILLIE.

HERMANN GOLLANCZ.

C. J. BOND.

A. K. CHALMERS.

MARY H. CLAY <sup>1</sup>  
 AGNES DUNNETT  
 LETITIA FAIRFIELD <sup>1</sup>  
 CHARLES GIBBS  
 W. F. LOFTHOUSE  
 ARTHUR NEWSHOLME  
 P. CARNEGIE SIMISON  
 W. C. SULLIVAN

## NOTES OF RESERVATION

### I

Though in cordial agreement with the greater part of the Report, we find ourselves unable to subscribe to those sentences which imply that under some circumstances the prevention of conception by mechanical or chemical means is permissible to Christian men and women. We believe that the use of contraceptives is a frustration of God's design in nature and of the primary end of the marital act and, as such, is unjustifiable. For that which seems to us to be a rule of divine law cannot, we think, be modified by man's needs and motives. In addition to other evils resulting from even so carefully guarded a recognition of conception control as is contained in this Report we consider that the most baneful will be the inevitable encouragement of immorality among unmarried

<sup>1</sup> See Reservation No. I

persons. If contraceptives are in any circumstances permissible for normal married people, we, for our part, do not see how any adequate answer can be given to those who desire a like safeguard in unauthorised connections, or to those who practise the most degrading forms of sensual indulgence.

E. LYTTELTON.

LETTITIA FAIRFIELD.

J. G. SIMPSON.

MARY, H. CLAY.

## II

I agree with the conclusion, as I understand it, in the Report that the "rightness" or "wrongness" of contraception must be a matter for individual judgment, and must depend in each particular case on the motives, the circumstances, and the effect such conduct may have on the individuals concerned, on the community, and on the human race.

In view of the great importance of the racial aspect of the problem, I should have welcomed in the Report some fuller consideration of the effect of birth control on racial welfare.

It is probable that the wider use of contraceptive measures by the more educated and prosperous classes is to-day exercising a dysgenic effect on the population. It is also possible that the least capable and least responsible sections may not readily learn or practise contraception on any large scale.

Nevertheless it is certainly true that accurate knowledge of the ways by which the higher mental and physical qualities can be transmitted and the lower qualities can be suppressed in human breeding must be widely available before communities can exercise any conscious control over the quality of the output of human life

With human nature as it is at present, and with our present very imperfect conditions of life, some control by artificial means may be an initial and preliminary but a necessary step to this end

If this be so, then the right attitude towards birth control must be the avoidance alike of indiscriminate condemnation and indiscriminate approval, with an earnest endeavour to direct this world movement, so full of possibilities for good and harm, along lines which will lead to race renewal instead of to race decay

But there is still a further aspect of the problem of conception control which is not fully dealt with in the Report

Although a well conceived and wisely applied scheme of emigration and redistribution of population *within the Empire* would no doubt act beneficially, by relieving the excessive density of population in the home-land, and should, for this and other reasons, be carried out on an adequate scale, still it is highly probable that, in the absence of birth control in some form, a world-wide pressure

of population on the means of subsistence must arise in the future.

Unless, therefore, mankind is prepared to return to the methods of war, pestilence, and famine, by which the natural increase of populations has in the past been kept within bounds, some control by artificial methods over the rate of multiplication would seem to be inevitable.

The growing success of international efforts for reducing disease, for relieving famine, and for controlling war will still further expedite the coming of the time when the pressure of populations on the available means of subsistence will bring about a lowered standard of life on a world-wide scale, and will thus become a serious menace of our civilisation unless counteracted by other means. Future developments may, and will no doubt, materially influence modern tendencies, and although these considerations are not put forward as requiring immediate settlement, they should not, in my judgment, be ignored in considering the problem of Birth Control as a factor in human progress.

I fully concur in the statement (see conclusion 4) as to the need for self-control in the sexual relations of married life, as indeed in all human relationships. But the exercise of self-control, to be effective, must amount to abstinence from sexual intercourse for prolonged periods. Abstinence of this kind under the conditions prevailing in many



working class and other homes is very difficult and may be impracticable for many persons, and is itself not without danger to mental stability and domestic happiness. It cannot therefore in my judgment be regarded as an alternative to conception control by artificial means in the case of normally constituted young married persons.

C. J. BOND.

### III

While there is much in this Report with which I agree, there are points to which, as a member of the Jewish community, I cannot subscribe. As the outlook of the other members of the Commission is specifically Christian, the Jewish point of view need not be obtruded here.

HERMANN GOLLANCZ.

## APPENDIX TO PART I

### SOME REMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

PREPARED BY PROF W F LOFTHOLSE, D D

As the Report points out, there is abundant evidence for the widespread and increasing use of contraceptive methods during the last fifty years, both in Europe and America. To attempt to form any estimate of their use in earlier periods is very difficult. In the simpler forms of society, population appears to remain almost stationary, in the absence of such external causes as the impact of civilisation. Schoolcraft, for instance, holds that the North American Indian tribes, for the most part, neither increased nor decreased in numbers throughout the century, from 1750 to 1850. Other investigations of society in the nomad or hunting stage have reached the same result. Apart from other checks to increase, such as shortness of food, war, and disease, the practices of abortion and infanticide are reported as common, and most tribes prescribe long periods of abstinence for both sexes, both during lactation, which is generally prolonged considerably beyond the

time usual in Europe to-day, and for other reasons.

In primitive agricultural societies, there appear to be signs of the knowledge of these means; as among the Thonga of S. Africa examined minutely by Henri Junod; it is also said to have existed among the German tribes before their conversion, the Arabs, and the Jews: and also among the Greeks and Romans. Instances of the discussion of these methods are also quoted from ancient Hindu writings; but the references in general are both few in number and obscure. The practices in question appear to aim either at producing sterilisation (surgical and very drastic, or medical and probably ineffective), or at contraception, when they are magical rather than medical.

When abortion and infanticide were both of them regarded as perfectly licit, as they were (and often remain) over a large part of the world, including both Europe and Asia, there was little temptation to try experiments with a far more obscure method of keeping down the family. Both practices were forbidden by the Christian Church; yet the first was far from being extirpated, and is painfully prevalent, as all evidence seems to show, to-day. Before the Industrial Revolution, a large family was not an economic advantage among the poorer classes of society, and late marriages were much more frequent among the poor than the rich. (Gonorrhœa may

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also have been responsible for considerable infertility). In addition, through the greater number of the Christian centuries, Malthus' "checks" were by no means stamped out; and compared with our modern standard, the infant mortality rate was appallingly high.

It thus appears that until quite modern times contraceptive checks, if known at all, were known to very few, and were not needed for the purpose of keeping down the numbers of births. The change came with the Industrial Revolution, when the demands of the new factories, replacing home industry, were felt to place a premium on large families, and when, in consequence, the rapid rate of increase of the "labouring population" became a cause of alarm. Malthus expressed, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, what was already a very common fear; but it appears to have been the reformer Francis Place who, some twenty years later, attacked the chief remedy (postponement of marriage) and substituted his own suggestion for the use of mechanical means to prevent conception. It is said that sheaths had been used in Italy as early as the sixteenth century; but we have no means of knowing when the devices which Place may have had in mind originated. Two books on the subject were published ten years later in America, of which the second, Knowlton's "Fruits of Philosophy" (1833), subsequently became notorious. Another work on the same subject, published in New

York by Dr. Trall in 1866, seems to have passed without any unfavourable notice being taken of it. In 1876, a Bristol bookseller was prosecuted for selling an edition of Knowlton containing various highly objectionable illustrations, and the action of Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, who challenged the law by the open sale of the book in 1877, gave the whole matter wide publicity. Thus, the knowledge of preventive checks became relatively common at the period when the old preventive checks to population had been removed; and while the birth rate of England and Wales has continued to decline from 1877 to the present time, the rate of infant mortality, from the beginning of the present century, has steadily fallen. And since the Bradlaugh trial, the publication of books dealing with this subject, apart from other objectionable features, has never been condemned in this country.

In the United States, what is known as the Comstock Bill was passed in 1873, mainly, it would seem, in alarm at the growth of immoral practices in general; it expressly couples the prevention of conception and the production of abortion as illegal; and legislation in France, mainly through fear of declining population, has done the same thing.

## PART II

### STATEMENTS AND EVIDENCE SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE

#### I

BY LORD DAWSON, M.D., F.R.C.P.

(Physician to the London Hospital, etc.).

BIRTH CONTROL has been a factor in the birth-rate for nearly half a century and in recent years an increasing factor.

It has attracted notice because the practice has spread amongst more classes and to more people in those classes, because its effects have become patent, and on account of its advocacy by some and condemnation by others.

In the upper and middle classes it is the rule rather than the exception. It is extending amongst the artizans and commencing to do so amongst the agricultural population. For example, a doctor who has had a wide practice for many years in an agricultural district has informed me that birth control methods, though unthought of twenty years ago, are now of common occurrence amongst the agricultural labourers.

Thus birth control is a widespread, a spreading, and deep-rooted practice.



Birth control not only determines the *number* but the *occasions* of childbirths. It is compatible with a large as well as a small family; it stands for *choice*, not *chance*, in the production of children.

Its establishment means the bringing of one more natural force under the control of man.<sup>1</sup>

It is for man to control that force rightly. If then the birth rate is being too much restricted in the interests of either the individual, the family, or the nation, surely the demand—the call—should be for *adequate parenthood*, not a condemnation of birth control as such.

Regulation of the number and occasions of child-births has been brought about by several causes—

1. The increasing density of population.
2. A higher standard of living in the home.
3. An increasing sense of the value of child life and of the responsibility of parenthood.
4. The desire of parents to equip their children in body and mind to the best of their abilities.
5. The social and domestic difficulties in the homes of educated people.
6. The desire of woman for a larger share

<sup>1</sup> It is stated that birth control is against the "natural law" What is the precise meaning of this expression? Civilisation is concerned with the fashioning of natural forces. The crux is whether, in any given instance, the fashioning is for good or evil.

in the world's working, a share she cannot take if her best years are *exclusively* absorbed in maternity.

The first of these causes is an economic one and has origin in the conditions of life. The remaining factors represent for the most part worthy motives, though 2 and 3 are apt to degenerate into attachment to luxury and *shirking of responsibility*.

### ADEQUATE PARENTHOOD

It is necessary first to decide principles.

For what do we stand? Children limited in number solely by the fertility of their mother, haphazard alike in their birth and rearing; or children predetermined who can be assured better nurture, adequate training, and individual care?

The former method is a remnant of the primitive order under which a ruthless struggle keeps down numbers by eliminating the unfit and unfortunate—a legacy which it is the purport of civilisation and Christian teaching to modify if not to terminate. The latter method limits numbers and aims at the birth of the fit and is more consonant with the thought and feelings of civilised mankind.

A solution must be found which is consistent with *social conscience* and yet with racial and economic facts.

It is a disadvantage that the present operation of birth control causes the better strains of

the race to multiply too little and the inferior strains to multiply in proportion too much.

I venture to think this admitted disadvantage will be a diminishing one, because birth control is extending to most classes. The population which from misfortune or fault is residual produces offspring in abundance, but its death rate is high. Moreover, it may be necessary in the future to consider steps to check the reproduction of the dangerously unfit.

Nor is it sound reasoning to say that the educated of this generation are the only security for the educated and the leaders of succeeding generations. The force of heredity is made up of many factors, some of which may have been latent for several generations and only await favourable mating for reassertion of their power.

Note how ability and leadership frequently emerge anew from the ranks of the people and perhaps found a strain of talent and character. The War afforded examples of this under the influence of necessity and opportunity.

Are there not signs that Youth is thinking more of fitness and that the attributes which attract the sexes are in large measure those that make for good breeding and healthy progeny—in short, that sex affinity tends to be more in accord with eugenics than formerly?

But it is true that in too many instances homes are without sufficient children, to their own detriment and that of the nation.

The remedies are to make parenthood less difficult to our sorely pressed intelligent classes<sup>1</sup> and bring home to those concerned the necessity and importance of motherhood. Conditions which are deterrent to child production should be studied. Intelligence needs better remuneration. It is useless to deplore the small families of, for instance, teachers, journalists, members of the Services, and scientific workers, unless their economic positions are improved. A wise statesmanship will aim at diminishing the burdens on these valuable citizens by better provision of medical services, by educational facilities, and by remissions of taxation graded progressively for each successive child up to, say, the fifth.

A wider appreciation of the importance of adequate parenthood is needed—its influence for good, on the health of the mother, on the maintenance of her youth and vigour, on the welfare of the children, and the happiness of the home. No gift in life can surpass the love of children.

A family of less than four children may be a necessity, but it is none the less regrettable.

Dr. Dublin, in an address at Chicago as President of the Statistical Society, finds, on the basis of the figures of the year 1920, that to keep the population of the United States stationary it is necessary for parents to produce on an average 3.1 children after making allowance for the men and women who remain

<sup>1</sup> I use the term in no narrow sense.

single and for the fact that one marriage in six has no living issue. The birth rate in the rural areas of the United States is above this figure, but in the urban areas below it.

Married folk would give heed to authoritative and reasoned pronouncements on the importance of adequate families, while condemnation of birth control as such would leave them unmoved. On the other hand, birth control organisations should consider it their duty to teach the importance of recurring motherhood as well as the control of motherhood. They are apt to forget the former in their desire to stress the latter.

### THE POSITION OF SEX IN PRESENT-DAY THOUGHT AND ACTION

Now, as always, sex attraction is one of the dominant forces in the world. But has it an undue or unhealthy influence? I think not. It is true that here and there forms of thought and attitudes of conduct manifest a morbid sexuality, and these give by their obtrusiveness an impression that they are typical of general thought and general conduct. This is an error.

This generation is not materialistic or sensual. Youth, speaking generally, is wholesome in thought and chivalrous in action. Witness the camaraderie between the sexes—their fuller life in work and play. Witness

has apart from parenthood a purpose of its own. It is something to prize and to cherish for its own sake. It is an essential part of health and happiness in marriage and is retained within its ambit by tenderness and sympathy and by the demands of work and duty.

These statements have always been in accordance with the facts of life. But the "Churches" have either condemned sexual union as an end in itself or given it a grudging acceptance or ignored the force and almost the fact of its existence. And yet it is known to all that sexual intercourse between married people occurs (and has always occurred) times innumerable where no intention of procreation exists and where it is simply and solely the physical expression of the love of two people.

Is not the difficulty in part due to the fact that Christian teaching is still enchained by the idea that sex love had its origin in the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, notwithstanding that modern theologians hold the narrative of this portion of the Book of Genesis to be without foundation in fact? The persistence of beliefs which, however revered their association, have outlived their authenticity imperils the whole fabric of allegiance.

Up to later Victorian times large families were the rule—children succeeded each other at intervals of one or two years. The harmful

the way in which girl workers enter and leave our cities.

There are greater freedom and confidence between men and girls, and I suggest it is to the good that the frankness of to-day should have-replaced the prudery of the previous generations. Manners and methods have changed rather than morals. Laments over the evils of the day are sometimes a symptom of failing flexibility.

The rise of woman to equality with man has, I think, led her to regard sexual enjoyment in marriage as her right, and sex-love as reciprocal in its desire and fulfilment, whereas in the Victorian age the wife was *often content to receive her master and bear him children without an equal participation in his privileges and pleasures*. This change has, I suggest, modified the problem of sex-love to-day.

### THE PURPOSES OF SEX-LOVE

It would be well to define what I mean by sex-love. Sex-love should be the physical expression of a lasting affection, and be so intimately blended with the feelings of helpfulness, sympathy, and intimate friendship as to form a union of body, mind, and spirit. It further should be associated with the love and desire for children.

By sex-love I mean that love which involves sexual union or the desire for such. Sex-love

has apart from parenthood a purpose of its own. It is something to prize and to cherish for its own sake. It is an essential part of health and happiness in marriage and is retained within its ambit by tenderness and sympathy and by the demands of work and duty.

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Up to later Victorian times large families were the rule—children succeeded each other at intervals of one or two years. The harmful



practice of prolonging lactation was employed as a means of delaying the next conception, and this coupled with a high infant mortality kept some control on the sizes of families. A conversation like the following was not an uncommon experience at Hospital—"How many children have you had?" "Had 11, buried 5."

Few people would be bold enough to wish to return to these large families with their high death rate and rough and tumble methods. That being so, some other control has become a necessity.

Birth control can be secured by—

1. Abstention.

2. By limiting intercourse to the relatively infertile days between the menstrual periods, conveniently styled *infertile coitus*.

3. Some contraceptive device.

1. Birth control by *abstention* is impracticable and harmful.

Abstention to be effective means virtual celibacy over long periods of time. A single intercourse often produces conception. A healthy woman could with very few acts of intercourse produce say 10 children in her married life. Imagine a young couple in love with each other occupying the same room and abstaining from intercourse for two or three years! And this would be necessary to prevent children coming too fast in the early years of marriage.

It is an impossible demand and, applied generally to married life, a *new* demand, for a generation or so ago no attempt was made to control conception and intercourse was unfettered except during late pregnancy and the parturition period

To speak of abstention and self-control in marriage as identical, of the necessity for married people "to put their houses in order," of "self-control being more necessary than birth control" is to show misapprehension of the questions at issue and to cause offence.

Self-control denotes, not abstention, but restraint, it envisages a sex-love which is free-minded, whole-hearted, prompted by mutual desire, which satisfies but does not satiate, and fits two people more not less for life's work.

Continuous abstention means, not self-control, but self-denial. Such self-denial for the lengthy periods necessary for effectiveness is asking more than human nature can give, or should be asked to give. It is damaging to health, engenders irritability and discontent, and sets up a barrier inimical to mutual confidence and affection.

It asks two people surrounded by the intimacies of love not to be lovers.

The attempts at abstention, the struggle between physical needs and conscience, produce conflicts damaging to mind and body, and if the attempts fail, as they assuredly do, the mind is left distressed.

Abstinence as a means of controlling the birth rate merits condemnation.

2. *Infertile coitus*—the restriction of intercourse to certain days when a woman is seldom fertile.

This method has the imprimatur of approval from ecclesiastical authority. But surely the same principle and aim underlie this as other contraceptive devices, and it requires the gift of sophistry to be able to justify one and condemn the other.<sup>1</sup>

"Infertile coitus" dissociates sexual union from the intention of procreation. It enables sex-love to be "an end in itself." Moreover, this method is open to objections. During these infertile days desire is diminished or absent in the woman. There is not then the instinctive attraction, the mutual desire, and the glow of fulfilment attaching to those days which "nature" has especially designed for sex-love.

It follows that "infertile coitus" results too much from a calculated desire for relief rather than from a "natural" and spontaneous mutual attraction, and the finer emotional accompaniments are lacking in its attainment.

Further, sexual desire is commonly cyclical

<sup>1</sup> Catholic teaching is that nothing must be done actively to thwart procreation, but that restriction of intercourse to the least fertile period, when procreation is most likely to be thwarted, and when the hope and intention of the parties are that procreation will not follow, is justifiable. Are we not told that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"?

in women, and is frequently absent during the infertile days, and is it fair to the woman, is it "natural," is it consistent with the most delicate ethical standard, to encourage sexual union exclusively at times when the spontaneous love impulse is minimal?

### 3 *Contraceptive devices*

I submit that the rightness or wrongness of contraception must not be judged by the merits or demerits of this or that device

What the Committee has primarily to decide is, whether the use of suitable contraceptive devices is right in principle. If yes, the *methods* of contraception concern the medical profession. If those at present in use are deficient and harmful, it will be the duty of the doctors to find those which are efficient and harmless

Up to now there has been no systematic investigation of contraceptive methods by the medical profession in this country, though such an investigation is now proceeding in the United States

This much may be stated with confidence, that some existing devices are physically harmless and others are not harmless and a few are harmful

But given that *some* devices are harmless, this Commission has no primary concern with methods, but rather whether their employment is in principle right

I submit that in these days of smaller death rates there is no alternative between

unfettered increase of the birth rate and birth control.

Of the three methods of birth control referred to above, effective abstinence is to be condemned; infertile coitus does not correspond to man's spontaneous desires and emphasises too much the material side of sexual union.

We are left with contraception. It has its disadvantages. It requires self-control, for restraint during the satisfaction of a spontaneous desire is tiresome.

But what are the objections? It is said to be physically injurious, to dull the finer feelings, to make for over-indulgence and sensuality.

The practice has for long been so usual, and in some sections of the community well-nigh universal, that these evils would have been apparent by now. Are they? Take the middle classes, take the lawyers, doctors, and clergy with their birth rate of 100, 103, 101 against the 231 birth rate of the dock labourers.

Are ill-health, sensuality, and indelicacy rife among them? Would doctors be likely to practise contraception if thereby they damaged themselves or their families? There is no evidence to show that in wedlock sexual union becomes unduly frequent with the practice of contraception. Indeed birth control involves more self-control than the unfettered intercourse of former times.

Is it not a fact that side by side with increase of birth control there has grown up an increasing sense of the value of individual child life? And it is right that parents should choose the best times during their married life for launching new lives into the world. With the power to choose the occasions for conception, marriage is promoted and at a younger age. This makes for morality and good citizenship. A young couple can afford one child, but perhaps needs to wait two or three years for the next. It is true that birth control may be utilised for unworthy ends. Is there any product of the human hand or mind of which this cannot be said?

That the birth of children should be a matter of choice and control is inevitable, desirable, and right. At the same time, there should be earnest and repeated insistence that adequate parenthood is a privilege to be cherished and not only promotes the health and welfare of individuals but is a patriotic duty in the interests of the nation.

## II

BY REV. PROFESSOR CARNEGIE SIMPSON, D.D.

I. THE bases from which to start must be, not pre-conceptions or traditions, but facts. The fundamental and primary fact is that nature (or God) has bound together sex intercourse and the procreation of offspring. Thus marriage (between persons of normal health and age) entered into and carried through with the deliberate purpose of avoiding procreation is a frustration of a naturally (and divinely) ordained end and purpose of marriage for the individual and for the race.

II. This fact, however, does not stand alone, but is complicated by a second fact which must be taken along with the other—namely, that intercourse is normally and naturally far more frequent than is requisite for the single end of the procreation of even a large family. This is not to be looked at with suspicion as if it meant indulgence in sensual lusts; it is as legitimate a fact of nature as the other. It plainly suggests that, in the natural (or divine) intention, while procreation is, as has been said, an essential element in marriage, it is not the complete or only end, even in respect to the act of sex intercourse.

III The question thus immediately arises whether on occasions and for periods within married life—not as a deliberate purpose in the whole conception and conduct of it—intercourse apart from the intention and desire of procreation is ethically permissible and worthy. It is essential that this question be unequivocally answered. The present writer is unhesitatingly of opinion that it must be answered in the affirmative. Not only do the facts of life make any other answer impossible, but it is unequivocally to be recognised that as the expression of mutual love in the married state, physical union is a worthy and sacred end in itself. (The contrary view is based on the theological idea that the sex instinct in humanity is a consequence of the fall, and its use to be justified only as a means to some further end.)

IV Therefore the question which next arises is that of the nature and degree of the "control" which may be rightly exercised (and which in some form must be exercised) in view of the two facts above stated—namely, that intercourse involves procreation, but also is, naturally, and normally more frequent than is necessary or desirable for that end. Here there are practically three positions which may be taken—

I It is held that the only control which is ethically permissible is that of abstinence through moral and voluntary self control when procreation is inadvisable and undesir-



able. Such self-control is, probably, far more practised in many married lives than some persons realise. Man is certainly a being with the natural physical urge of sex-instinct, but he is not only that; he is also a rational and moral and social being. And a man who, in the relationships of marriage, is true to the *whole* of his being may and often does relate that physical urge to the control of rational, moral, and social responsibilities. Still, while this is true and the denial of it is to be resented, it must be frankly recognised that such abstinence is not a law which can be imposed on all; and further that in many cases, especially those of young married persons who are really in love with one another, it easily leads to an unhealthy strain, both physical and psychical. Abstinence from sex intercourse is one thing for those who live a celibate life; it is another and may be a really deleterious thing when insisted on between persons of normal age and health, in the peculiar and constant intimacies of married life. Thus this solution of the question, while not to be denied its place, cannot be regarded as adequate.

2. A second position makes the concession that, when procreation is not advisable or desired, intercourse is ethically permissible at certain seasons when it is less likely to lead to conception. This position has received a measure of ecclesiastical countenance—both Roman and Anglican, and also Jewish. On

examination, it does not wholly commend itself to the ethical judgment. Apart from the fact, which is prudential more than ethical, that such periods are not really "safe," two essentially ethical comments suggest themselves. One is that the moral difference is not clear between thus hoping and arranging that procreation may not follow and more definitely securing that it does not, it surely cannot be maintained that an act is more moral in its character because it is less certain in its consequences. But, secondly, intercourse at these periods is often not, in the deeper sense, natural—at least to the woman—as such periods are the time when the woman's sex-desires are quiescent and the first principle of intercourse should be that there is mutual desire. A solution must be found along other ethical lines than this.

3 We are thus brought to consider the position which maintains the legitimacy of what are called "artificial" methods of conception control—at least in certain cases and within certain limits—and these must be looked at separately and with care.

V The method known as *coitus interruptus* is usually classed among such methods, though it does not involve the use of any external artifice. This practice is, doubtless, very widespread. There are grave medical objections to it which we need not here discuss. It is, however, not "artificial" in the stricter sense, and we pass to the question whether

methods more precisely so described are or are not to be ethically condemned

In answering this crucial question, it is important that we distinguish in our minds three things—what is *distasteful*, what is *dangerous*, what is *wrong*. To many persons, all “artificial” methods of birth control are *distasteful* or even *repugnant*, but it is hardly legitimate to assert this as if it must be the universal expression of the healthy human instinct which is the unconscious basis of ethical law. It is the fact that many persons of indubitably refined and even religious sensibility do not share this repugnance, or, at least, are satisfied that rational and moral considerations counterbalance it. Methods must be shown to be more than personally distasteful before they can be declared to be sinful. More relevant and important, therefore, is it to realise that these methods may be dangerous both to society and to the individual, and that not only physically but also morally. How far certain methods are physically injurious is a question for medical judgment. But that the practice of “artificial” birth control carries with it real social and moral perils will be disputed only by the blind and biased partisan. It certainly opens wider the door even within marriage to a selfish and anti social indulgence, which would enjoy the luxury of love while evading its responsibilities, and also to an increased because a safer inducement to sexual relation

ships outside of marriage. These and other dangers are most seriously to be recognised. Yet, with the admission of this, it may be maintained that certain good results would also follow the wise and considered practice of birth control, in the health both of children and of mothers and in the happiness of many marriages. Moreover, the dangers attendant on the misuse of a practice do not, in themselves, make its use sinful and the thing itself essentially wrong. We must, therefore, press the problem still further back, behind what is distasteful and even what is dangerous, and ask on what clear ethical ground or principle it is to be characterised as, in itself, essentially wrong and sinful.

VI The attempt, unfortunately made by some who are accorded the name of theologians, to base a case here on the crude and disreputable story of Onan in the Book of Genesis merits no attention. Nor is it convincing to say that "artificial" birth control is wrong because it is "artificial" and therefore "unnatural." All "artificial" devices are "unnatural," but they are not, therefore, wrong. To take a relevant illustration, it is "unnatural" to save child-bearing from pain, but "artificial" means for doing so are not now regarded as a sin against God. An "artificial" or "unnatural" device is obviously not wrong in itself, but only when it is used for a wrong or sinful end. And so the one real and relevant argument that birth

control is wrong is that its' end—namely, the deliberate frustration of procreation—is wrong. It is here that the ethical issue lies—in that *for* which, not in that *by* which, the thing is done. But we have already seen, at the outset of this paper, that this issue is not quite simple or single, and that it has in it what theologians call a *distinguo*. It is an unnatural and therefore a wrong frustration of the purpose of a great fact of nature to separate intercourse from procreation in the whole conception and conduct of marriage and of married life (between persons of normal age and health): to seek this by "artificial" means is sin, not because the means are "artificial," but because the end and idea are contrary to nature's (and God's) purpose. But it cannot be said that it is so to frustrate nature's (or God's) purpose if, on occasions and for adequate reasons, intercourse be engaged in apart from the end of procreation; and if so, means used for this cannot be called wrong merely because they are of the nature of "artificial" devices, though they may be distasteful to many and even dangerous. The conclusion appears to be that it is not possible, on grounds which can stand scrutiny and will prove convincing, to affirm categorically, absolutely, and indiscriminately that birth control, even by "artificial" methods, is and must be sinful. More than the method must be taken into view before the matter is so decided. Cases must be judged on their merits; and in the merits,

both the end and also the conditions must be regarded as material elements in any ethical judgment. If this be so—and the present writer has come to this conclusion, not only after much hesitation, but also, if he may say so, against the bias with which he approached the question—then it is most important that ethical and Christian opinion should frankly say so. The reason for that remark is this: There are certainly many cases in which birth control is sinful, and these the moral and Christian mind of the country should clearly condemn, and that condemnation will only be weakened and discounted if it is associated with an indiscriminate condemnation which cannot really maintain itself. In a word, we shall fail to impress the conscience of the people with the sin of birth control *in certain cases* if we attempt to lay it down categorically and absolutely that it is a sin in itself and *in all cases*.

VII It thus appears that *not indiscriminate veto but rather discriminating counsel is both the true and the only effective and useful line which the Church and the Christian conscience should take on this difficult question*. What that counsel should be must, of course, depend largely on the circumstances of different cases. This raises many questions which call for further discussion than is within the scope of this paper, which deals only with the primary ethical question of whether birth control is in itself to be condemned as wrong.

But, to speak more generally in a closing word, the way of meeting the many and grave perils associated with this new and most potent factor in social life is to uphold and inculcate high and ideal conceptions of marriage and married life, and, also, of the whole subject of sex relationship whether within or outside that tie. A mere veto is futile here, not only because it is negative, but still more because its justification, in reason or even in religion is, as a matter of fact, *not* clear and convincing. But what can be made clear and convincing to the morally honest and healthy mind and conscience is the high and responsible trust of marriage and the "honour" in all sex-relationship which unless a man "love more" he cannot love anyone "much." These moral ideals are authoritative, as a long debated ecclesiastical condemnation of certain methods and practices can never be; and it is these ideals which will prove the true antidote to the many dangers to which, from this source and other sources, our social life to-day is exposed.

### III

By THE RIGHT REV BISHOP GORE, D D

(*Oral statement*<sup>1</sup>)

I BEGIN by describing the various methods which have been in use in ancient days and in modern days to prevent conception. I first make a remark in regard to the destruction of the embryo and then with regard to what is known as *coitus interruptus*. Then as regards two methods which are based on traditional belief, that is what is mainly spoken of as the "safe periods," and then as to the five other methods which are described by Dr Marie Stopes and Dr Beale. Of those I exclude two, the mystical method of self restraint which appears to belong to some curious sect of believers but which is impracticable, and the use of a metal pin—the meaning of that I do not know. I asked Sir Thomas Horder and he did not know what that meant. Then I take the three methods that remain, and my attempt is to call attention to the fact that the alleged statements about science having discovered a method which is easy, practical, and not disgusting, do not appear to be confirmed by the facts. Especially I emphasise that the only method which Dr Stopes and Dr Beale recommend is what is called the

<sup>1</sup> This oral statement had reference to a printed statement which I had not liberty to publish but was in the hands of the Committee.



check pesseries, and that is a method which, you would suppose, would be extraordinarily difficult to apply. I have had a conference with Sir Thomas Horder, who, of course, is a very good medical authority, and he confirms what I say. He also says that *coitus interruptus* is temperamentally impossible for many British men. With regard to sterile days, he says they vary very much from woman to woman, and each woman believes that she knows her own, with the result that mistakes happen, and he emphasised the fact that the sexual impulse is during these periods often in abeyance in the woman. But what I was most struck with was that the approved method of check pessaries he declares to be impracticable for most women. He gave me authority to say that his great desire was that in this extraordinarily difficult matter scientific medicine should be kept clear of other questions, whereas in the books on birth control he found a confusion between the scientific motives and other motives. He instanced a book he gave me called the "Pivot of Civilisation," by Margaret Sanger. But he specified also other books. He made the same complaint in regard to books written in favour of "total abstinence." The principle of keeping the scientific treatment separate from other motives was, he found, being widely violated. It was manifest in the "Pivot of Civilisation" that the dominant motive of the book was to put the control

of birth universally in the hands of the woman and not of the man, and also the freeing of the woman and of humanity generally from any control except of their own individual feeling, and he resented the mixing up of medical science, which he said was extremely ambiguous and hesitating on this subject, with a general propaganda based on other motives. Then he expressed his doubts as to the wisdom of so much advertisement on a subject which he felt quite sure not only had been hitherto, but was intended to be, veiled in a protective modesty. So far, then, my only point is that the claim to have arrived by a process of careful science at a method which renders birth control innocuous and easy is not borne out. I think that Dr Beale's remark is very noticeable. There has been exceedingly little advance in methods of prevention for generations past. No single method is infallible. The great danger arises from carelessness and a sliding into casual ways, and that great and real danger is not likely to be easily removed. Then I wish to emphasise and to quote some remarks from a private memorandum prepared for a committee of Churchmen anxious to determine the duty of the Church of England in the matter of birth control. The particular paragraph reads—

“It is important to remark that all the books cited regard these contraceptives as expedients for use only within marriage, and

are actuated by the motive of assisting to maintain the honour of marriage. Nevertheless, it seems impossible to ignore the fact that the expedients in question are widely sought and used outside marriage. There is a widespread determination to enjoy sexual relations, which it is described as unnatural and dangerous to inhibit, without the 'risk' of parentage. It is impossible to ignore how much this non-moral determination is responsible for the demand for expedients and the use of them. It is blindness to overlook the extent to which young women, who have no strict moral or religious principles in life, have been in the past 'kept straight by fear of the risk,' or to overlook the consequence which will follow the recognition that the 'risk' can be abolished. It is impossible to envisage the prospect without the gravest alarm."

It is quite impossible to know the facts of the case without knowing that "birth control" is in the world actually at work on the largest scale as a means of enabling people to enjoy sexual relations, without what used to be called "risk."

THE CHAIRMAN—THE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER: You mean outside the marriage state?—Outside, yes.

BISHOP GORE: As regards the economic aspect I desire to say that I do not think we shall get any decisive verdict on the subject

from the economists or the political philosophers. I was present at a remarkable meeting of the Political Philosophy and Economy Club at which a great many of the best known economists were present and . . . . . opened the discussion. He spoke very strongly against the idea that the real peril of civilisation was the increase of population beyond the means of support; and there was a discussion in which I noticed that they were all fully alive to the importance of the practice of birth control. No one disputed the statement of . . . . . (which I thought extraordinary) that its economic and its social effects in the long run would be as important as the social and economic effects of the invention of the steam engine; and no one deprecated that statement. They were all extraordinarily impressed with the significance of the present agitation, but it was obvious there was considerable difference of opinion, as to whether "race suicide" or the increase of population over the supplies of nature were the more pressing danger. It was quite obvious that their opinions were very much divided, and I do not think we are likely to get any verdict one way or another from the economists or political philosophers.

Then I come to the arguments that do weigh with me. I feel all the time when I am talking about it that it would be much better that the discussion should be carried on by married people, but I cannot help that; if one

is summoned to give an opinion, one must give it as well as one can.

There is one point where I was pulled up by a friend's argument in favour of birth control on which I continued to feel a profound disagreement with him. He endeavoured to force the Christian Church by a sort of logic, that because it has admitted the legitimacy of sexual connection in the intra-menstrual period it ought also to admit the modern methods of birth control. I always deprecate that kind of logical argument.

Then I come to what is the main point. I do think that the attempt to separate altogether the sexual act from the production of offspring is rightly called unnatural. I do not think it is possible to look at the place in biology of the sexual act without feeling that its primary purpose is the propagation of the species. No doubt the sexual connection has another object in cementing married love, but it does seem to me that to offer a remedy to humanity by which the one (sexual connection) can be absolutely separated from the production of offspring is tremendously unnatural. I can hardly conceive any law, which, in the deepest sense, can be called natural more emphatically than the law which united the sexual act with the intention of offspring, and I notice that my scientific and religious friend who wrote the memorandum I have already referred to in favour of "birth control" was obliged to treat the will to have

offspring and the obtaining of offspring as an *additional* duty distinct from the sexual impulse. It is to be regarded as an additional altruistic motive or sense of the duty to the State and society, and to be kept distinct from the desire of sexual intercourse. I think that is to produce a situation which it is quite right to call unnatural. The normal implication of the sexual act appears to me to be proclaimed by all nature, and if you take into account the teachings of Scripture, that, of course, is much emphasised. I maintain that Our Lord's words describe the natural law, that is, the delight of the woman in the production of offspring, and the willingness to bear the pain which is the price of it, because "she remembereth no more the anguish for the joy that a man is born into the world," and I cannot resist the impression that the whole of this movement is unnatural, in its intention and disastrous in its consequences if it were successful, and so far it is successful.

Then there is one thing I have said with very great regret, but I do say it with an emphasis which is based on a disagreeably considerable amount of experience. There exists a great deal of what we used to call unnatural vice. It appears to present itself among us, as it were, in waves at different periods. It was the confirmed habit of Englishmen in ancient days, so much so that St. Anselm, when he first came to England,

said he could not find anyone in England to condemn it, and therefore there was no chance of the Church exercising effective restraint of it. It has cropped up in England time after time and it appears to be very prevalent now. Now, those who are in favour of that vice are, of course, very much interested in the movement which is called birth control, and they say to me, or to others, who speak with horror of their practices and tendencies "Yes, but you cannot any longer call it unnatural, for now everybody allows birth control, which aims at separating the sexual act from its connection with the production of offspring. If that is admitted, how can you condemn our practice, which is, according to our instincts, natural?" Now I know what to answer them if I deny their premiss, but I frankly admit I do not know what to answer them if I am not to deny the premiss.

A young doctor moved me very much by his arguments about the unwanted children based upon his experiences in the neighbourhood of St. Thomas's Hospital. He argued that the widespread use among that sort of population of contraceptives, although it is undesirable, would be at least better than the present system. The more experience I have of human life, the more astonishment I feel at the normal difficulty in regulating sexual relations. But the highest welfare of the human race is bound up with their regulation—difficult as it is.

Then I am also very much interested in the question What is the use of the Christian Church fighting a losing battle against a practice which is sure to become very prevalent? I believe if that prophecy is right, the world will be exposed to tremendous perils, so tremendous that they would become disastrous I do believe in the danger of race suicide, or the diminution of the best kind of stock which we should most desire to see propagated I think that is a tremendous peril, and of course it is apparent in France

My last remarks will hardly interest this Committee I will simply say that I rather prefer the situation as it stands amongst us of the Anglican Church to the situation as it stands in the Roman Church, because I think that the attempt in civilised countries like France and Italy to maintain a rigid law, without excommunicating a vast mass of the population, produces a widespread system of moral evasion

I should not like to end without saying how desperately difficult I feel this subject is, and I should never have dreamt on my own initiative of offering my remarks for your consideration

**THE CHAIRMAN** We are most grateful to you for allowing us to see your private memorandum and to hear what you have to say about it There is one difficulty which the Committee have been feeling, and that is the question which is raised in almost every



memorandum from every witness That is, the legitimacy or otherwise of the sexual act in certain circumstances apart from an intention of progeny It is admitted that middle aged people are perfectly right in using the sexual act even when the possibility of children is out of the question You said yourself that the sexual act has other objects or implications than the production of children and is in some sense a sacramental act consummating and even increasing married love?

BISHOP GORR Well, I feel that there is a very great difference between allowing that married persons need the sexual act for maintaining the intimacy of married life under the conditions which nature imposes, including the use of what is, of course, a very uncertain method of control by the choice of the intra menstrual period for the sexual act I do feel a great difference between the use of the checks which nature supplies and the introduction of artificial methods, because the latter separate absolutely the sexual act from its natural consequences whenever man so desires I must confess that I am less and less impressed with this attempt to take refuge in the sanction given to the choice of what is called the safe period I feel there is the greatest difference between the use of the checks which nature supplies and so radical an interference with what I think we have the very best reason to call the law of nature as is involved in the

use of instruments which claim or aim to separate absolutely the sexual relation from the hope or fear of offspring

DR BOND I understood Bishop Gore to say that he feels there is evidence of homosexuality becoming more prevalent in this country Now it is important to know about that, and we should like to have some data on which his knowledge is founded, whether it is knowledge of life in the schools, in industry, in the Army, or in the Navy?—I do not know that it is possible to give statistics I have had to do with young men a great deal, at one time at the University, and afterwards in other relations, and I have had a good deal to do with clergy who have had similar experiences and duties, and what I am saying now I should not have said some years ago There is no doubt that during the War unnatural vice gained an alarming prevalence I think that the condition of things in London at that time was very bad I put that in because I came lately into contact with groups of men, very refined young men, who nourished themselves on the literature of Dr Havelock Ellis, especially a book that is not published in England but abroad on that subject, and the claim is put forward in a very reasonable way I believe I am justified in maintaining the distinction between what is natural and what is unnatural, but I find my distinction is weakened and I should have thought removed, if I am to allow that it is legitimate abso-

lutely to separate the sexual act from its consequences in the production of offspring

But as regards the question of birth control and married people, does it not follow that birth control would not only not increase homo sexuality but rather would tend to diminish it?—I mean that it justifies the philosophy of homo sexuality

There is another question I should like to ask Bishop Gore, and that is whether in his judgment it is desirable or wise for any Church as a Church to approve or disapprove of birth control as a general practice to normal married people?—I think that any Church is bound to make every effort to arrive at a conscientious opinion as to what is to be said in the innumerable cases which present themselves to the pastor, demanding advice

My point is, do you think it wise to issue it as general instructions to human beings or whether you would consider that the case of each married couple should be considered as a case by itself, having regard to the circumstances, the motives, and the consequences of the act, which they take the responsibility of?—I do not think it is possible to take the isolated individuals I think you must consider the proposal of birth control methods in general and have an opinion on them in general on ethical grounds

The only chance for the improvement of mankind is apparently some improvement in human nature To some of us interested in

eugenics, it seems that this question of birth control is really the first step and the necessary step in arriving at some decision in which mankind will be able to obtain some control over itself for the purpose of procreating better stock?—That is an interesting question, I have always thought (and that is largely the point of view of that book I referred to “Pivot of Civilisation”) I should be disposed to contend that so far from the idea that birth control was a method likely to improve stock, all our experience shows that it tends in the opposite direction

At present, no doubt?—Always, as the rougher the person's life and the more rough and ready their methods, the less likely they are to use these difficult methods of restriction, and the promotion of the philosophy of birth control would be to restrict the more educated stocks more and more and increase the proletarian stocks

You think it will always continue to be dysgenic?—I have always thought so

MRS CLAY I do not think Bishop Gore has told us what he thinks of the right and wrong of the sexual act if it is not fully carried out? When you place these checks, you are frustrating the act, and are you not taking away the sacramental nature, and what are you leaving except the pleasure of the act?—Well, I am not prepared to condemn the use of the checks which nature supplies I agreed that where it comes

to the point of adopting a special expedient in order to be able absolutely to separate the sexual act from the production of offspring, then I do think it becomes unnatural. I might say that I very much deprecate the casual and easy use of the word sacramental. I do not think that, considering what men are in the mass, there is any sense in elevating the language in which we discuss this to the highest plane.

DR. GILLIE: There is a large number of Christian people very much perplexed on this question, and the only advice you propose to give is that the Church condemns this and that and they must develop their moral resources? —Yes, I think that is so. Speaking with an experience of dealing with these individuals, I think that if you are trying to get down to what their fundamental conscience is, the feeling at the bottom is almost always: "I know the beastly thing is wrong, but what on earth are we to do?"

Now, I want to take up the question of *coitus interruptus*. That was brushed to one side because it was said to be unhealthy. Now supposing it was not unhealthy, is that included in the list of contraceptives?—Yes, I would have thought it was defeating the end. Sir Thomas Horder said that he was persuaded that more than half of the British males found it impossible.

As regards the moral quality of the act, so long as there is intention to defeat the pur-

pose of the sexual act as regards progeny, does the Bishop mean that there is a distinct moral difference between using the opportunities that nature provides and using the opportunity that one's own will provides?—Yes, I do, that is the point in my whole argument

That the moral quality of the act is different?—I think so, and I base my conviction on the conclusion that to separate the sexual act from the production of progeny absolutely is unnatural. It seems to me that we are in face of a great movement. You have got the history of the sexual act occurring repeatedly in married life, and very often under conditions which were far beyond the possibility of offspring. I have not wished to interfere with this, it apparently lies in nature's own hands. But I feel that I am face to face with a new proposal of the widest range, and which does seem to me to be unnatural and I believe will be disastrous to any civilisation which adopts it and sanctions it.

The Christian people I know who practise birth control say that if it is God's will that they should have another child, they would welcome that other child, they do not absolutely intend to rule it out?—But the method aims at a system of preventing it.

DR CARNEGIE SIMPSON. The acts of intercourse are more frequent than the necessities for procreation and therefore the separation is justified, but you won't accept that?—No, it is a fact of nature that every sexual act is

accompanied with the consequences of its normal result, and it is quite well known that it will only have that result in, say, one out of twenty or thirty, or forty, of the uses of sexual connection; but you are not *excluding* the natural result. I do not think you can complain of my use of the word natural so long as you admit that the whole of the process of nature in sexuality is intended for the normal production of progeny.

But not on every occasion?—No, but that justifies me in saying that to make these two things absolutely separable is to fight against nature, and that is why I believe if you *sanction such artificial separation and if you remove the inhibition against such an artificial separation*, you would be doing a most disastrous thing in civilisation.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: May I ask one or two questions to discover whether I have got your position clear in my own mind? You define, Bishop Gore, a sin as a violation of a law of nature?—Yes, is it not? Now I do not know in what respect the problem of birth control has become different from the problem which has presented itself through the ages, except that the provision of certain expedients has intervened. The same kind of problem has always been before married life. I think, on the whole, Christian civilisation has been very successful where people have been content to accept the Christian law in regard to marriage, and man and woman have been

fairly happy. I do not see why they should not be equally happy now. But there has come in this new proposal, which would no doubt remove certain anxieties, but I believe would be attended by consequences far more disastrous.

Then I understand you to hold that the use of artificial methods to control conception is a sin because it violates a law of nature? And do you hold that when a couple marry beyond the age of the possibility of procreation they may have sexual intercourse?—Undoubtedly You see, there is the long tradition of the human race in which marriage has obviously implied the constant use of sexual intercourse far beyond the limit of possible or probable procreation I suppose nobody has the slightest desire to prohibit that There is no desire to interfere with these traditions about marriage

Your only point, therefore, is that you are against the use of artificial means under any circumstances, because it is a violation of a law of nature to use them?—Yes

The law of nature being?—That intercourse is naturally for procreation

And although conception follows in only a small percentage of connections the "law" you speak of remains unbreakable, unmodifiable?—Yes

Intercourse independent of the use of artificial means, whether for procreation or not, whether it results in conception or not,



you do not interfere with? Your one and only objection is to the use of what are loosely called "artificial" means, because it is a sin to take advantage of our knowledge to modify or thwart one of the results of a natural law?—I should also include what is called *coitus interruptus*.

You would regard that also as artificial or unnatural—as a sin?—It is certainly unnatural.

Might I argue that a breach or modification of, *e.g.*, the law of gravitation is a sin?—To violate a law of nature is a sin which avenges itself, I suppose.

## IV

BY LADY BARRETT, C.B.E., M.D., M.S.

(*Oral Statement*)

I do not want to put many points before this Committee, but there are two or three things which seem to be obscured in the controversy to-day.

The first is that whatever may be said in public about contraceptives, *there is no perfect contraceptive* nothing that has recently been introduced contains any new principle, and I do not think it is possible to say that there is any contraceptive that has not some disadvantage. Some statements made in public discussion on this subject might lead us to imagine that a Heaven sent revelation had come to the world and therefore ought to be put into use. It really is not so.

The next point is that *child bearing left to nature is not so prolific as would appear*. It is often assumed that unless contraceptives are used every woman who is married will bear a child once a year or every two years at least. This may be so in isolated cases, but speaking generally it is very far from the fact. Since efforts to limit the family have become so widespread, I have been con-

vinced that a very large number of people are using contraceptives who would not be bearing children in any case, and the very point which is made by honest supporters of contraceptives like Lord Dawson, viz., the desirability of preserving natural intercourse, is uselessly sacrificed, for intercourse arranged for by contraceptives is not natural. That is a thing about which I am quite convinced. Large numbers of young couples use contraceptives for some years and later they seek advice because they want children, but find they cannot effect conception. One of two things is quite clear; either that they never would have had children and have been using contraceptives needlessly, or their use has rendered conception later difficult or impossible. Scarcely a week goes by without my seeing patients who earnestly wish they had never used any means to prevent children which they really greatly desire to have.

On the other hand, *whenever the bearing of children is a danger to a woman's life* it is the duty of her medical adviser to make it clear to herself and to her husband that *conception must not be allowed to occur*; then arises the question how that is to be prevented, and, in my opinion, that is a medical subject. Whether that is to be attained by abstention from intercourse or by some artificial means is an ethical decision, and I think that ethical decision must be left with the patient and her husband, having had all possibilities put clearly

before them. I do not think that ethical decisions are the duty of the doctor, but I do think it is the duty of the doctor to put fairly before the patient all matters that are involved which may not be only physical they may be ethical or psychical, but the final decision of action in such cases, I think, must be in the hands of the persons concerned. Those are the main principles that would govern any thing I have to say in particular about this question.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON. I understand Lady Barrett is opposed to birth control on general ethical grounds, with the exception of exceptional cases?

I cannot answer the question "Am I opposed to birth control?" by a direct affirmative or negative. There are a large number of cases in which I definitely advise it, and it is difficult to define in generalised statements exactly how far one is opposed to the practice. There is no doubt that to-day large numbers of young couples have the question raised in their minds as to whether they are going to practise birth control when there is no reason why they should have considered the question. That seems to be unfortunate, and in many cases the young people do not have a clear point of view presented to them on the subject in all its aspects. When one has opportunity to do this fairly I have never yet known a healthy young couple who have not gone away deciding

that at the beginning of married life, at all events, it was not the thing for them. I should say if every doctor carries out exactly what Lord Dawson advises, countless young couples will be using *contraceptives* in the early years of marriage, and I am more and more impressed by the fact that one of the results of the propaganda about birth control is that numbers of these people want children later on, and cannot have them. There are contraceptives that prevent future conception, I am absolutely convinced of that fact, but also a great number of young couples are using them quite unnecessarily, as they would not have children in any case.

Is it not the case that people who use contraceptives have children regularly?—They generally let a few years go between, and, in some cases, you will find that they stop at one or two children, when they are earnestly desiring more.

You recommend couples to exercise self-control during the early years?—If by self-control you mean abstinence, it would be unnecessary. I should say that most young couples would not have the second child within two years. I consider that the Victorian woman was leading too abnormal a life—sedative, confined, uninteresting—for her statistics to count. I have asked people if they have prevented the children from coming when the family was spaced. One's impression is that there are a large number

with children two or three years apart, who have not used contraceptives, quite as many as those who have. Statistics were taken in America of the numbers of children in educated families—those who have used prevention and those who have not, and, curiously enough, the children work out at smaller numbers among those who did not prevent than those who did. So it is a very difficult subject to determine. If you ask me my advice to the newly-married, I should say to them that they would be wise to make sure they could get their second child before resorting to preventive measures. If three children follow in quick succession, then they can stop and decide what they are going to do.

MRS CADBURY. I should have thought that that was generally the case when they have had three or four children very quickly?—If a woman came to me and said ‘I have had three children and do not want more’—well, that woman may have come because she is over tired and unfit to bear children, and, on the other hand, she may have come because she does not want them. In most cases, a woman who consults her doctor comes because she is tired out, and her health is affected by bearing children in too quick succession. Now nature really guards against that at once, because a woman in that condition does not desire intercourse, and when you come to that point my view would be that intercourse should only take place when the desire was

mutual I believe it is a real law of nature that only then is the act associated with highest pleasure, and I believe it is nature's way of preventing a woman from bearing children to her detriment

THE CHAIRMAN Would you say that the spacing of children would be adequately provided for by that natural working, namely, that there should be no intercourse except with the desire of both parties, and therefore the use of contraceptives is thereby rendered unnecessary?—Yes, from a purely health point of view

DR. BOND Lady Barrett tells us there are large numbers of young normal couples who would not in the ordinary way have children, and therefore contraceptives in these cases are absolutely useless She would not extend the number of those unfertile couples to the working classes, because it is shown by experience that normally the working class population recently married have children, and they are 80 per cent of the population?—They are more prolific, and that is one of the reasons why I cannot regard this from the point of view of the individual alone I think it is a race question

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME Is it not a fact that there is an undesirable lowering of the birth rate and that that is unequally distributed? How would you remedy that as far as the poorer people are concerned?—I believe one of the reasons is that the con

ditions of life under which working mothers live at present are not healthy. I believe they are over-worked, and not a single one of the laws of industrial hygiene has yet been applied to the woman in the home, and for that reason I believe she is what we might call the prolific type. My view would be that for the good of the country it is very desirable that the better-class people should have fairly large families. On the other hand, I believe that social reform is immediately connected with this subject, and reform of the conditions in which women of the poorer classes live is far more important for equalising the fertility of different classes than the spread of contraceptive knowledge, and my opinion is that the working-class woman will accept that.

I was asked once to go to Bristol to speak to a meeting of working-class women on birth control. When I got there I found it was a meeting of the I L P led by a very ardent contraceptive adherent. They told me the whole of the women were in favour of using contraceptives, and I did not try to persuade the women one way or the other. I told them the facts, and asked them if they would rather have certain of their work arranged in ways I suggested for them, leaving them more freedom for their children and household, or whether they would rather reduce the number of their children. I found what I have always found among working women,



that they would infinitely rather have working conditions made possible, and in regard to their families, they did not mind a few extra children. What is wearing out these women is the impossible conditions under which they work, and the country have not yet attempted to apply the laws of industrial hygiene to the woman in the home, because it means drastic reform if it is done, although it is perfectly possible.

Your view is that birth control should not be taught in the clinics, but rather that these reforms should be adopted?—I think the teaching of conception control to women in baby clinics is harmful. The thing revolts those women of a simple standard in some way (I do not quite know how to explain that, but it is a fact), and they are readily turned against the use of contraceptives. It is how over, unfair to turn them in the opposite direction unless we do something to relieve their difficulties. I am dead against saying that these people must not use contraceptives, but I think the whole campaign about contraceptives should oblige the country to consider the working class mother—the fact that she is bearing so many children shows that there is something wrong.

DR L FAIRFIELD Is it not your experience among working class women, both rural and industrial, that there is a tremendous tradition of absolute sex subservience? The one thing a wife must not do is to attempt to restrain

her husband in any way, and in many cases it becomes a serious drain upon her. Do you not think that besides reform in domestic hygiene a good deal can be done in trying to raise the standard of conduct in that way?—Yes, that obtains undoubtedly, and will only be remedied by education of the husband as to his responsibility in the matter of consideration for the wife. Really, intercourse is an outrage unless it is mutual—and that is the difficulty, the thing you cannot teach to the working class woman.

DR. GILLIE I understand, Lady Barrett, that you emphasise very much the fact that there would be a great deal of natural birth control without any use of contraceptives?—Yes.

Now, we will take the case, not of a working man and his wife, but of the clerk and his wife. They marry and have two children, and they are very much concerned about having a third, as it would be really something of a disaster both from the financial point of view and from the point of making the little home comfortable. In that case I am not clear whether your decision is that guidance concerning the avoidance of birth would be right or wrong supposing it was not going to affect the health much?—Of course, directly you come to that type of case the answer depends very much on the actual circumstances and the feelings of the individuals and also upon the personal judgment of anyone who is

asked to give advice. Personally I would never give the actual advice.

You would always leave it to them to decide?—Yes, I should consider it my duty as a doctor if they told me all their circumstances and if they made out the case as you put it and they said to me: "Now we have talked this matter over carefully and we have come to the conclusion that we simply cannot, it would be a disaster to have another child," and then asked me how best to prevent it—I should tell them how they could prevent it, and I should warn them against methods which are particularly harmful (incidentally may I say that they would be most of the methods recommended by Dr. Marie Stopes), and I should tell them what I considered to be the best methods, and I should leave them to decide their own course of action. I should tell them all the possible effects of using contraceptives, and I should certainly warn them that one of the safest methods often tends to prevent conception in the future. One should try to find out very carefully whether they really wanted to prevent any conception in the future or not. When you come to the individual cases, there are so many unexpected conditions that reveal themselves—*e.g.*, a patient in conversation may appear an exceptional case where Dr. Marie Stopes's methods are a success and harmless, yet on further examination they are not only unsuccessful, but in the attempt

to use them they have been anything but harmless. Really each individual is a problem in herself, and it is almost impossible to say beforehand exactly what advice one would give; but with patients such as you describe I should probably tell them the decision is after all theirs to make and not mine.

DR. BOND: Then there is nothing we can put down on paper as the general rules regarding birth control and issue to the public?—Birth control is an artificial, not a natural procedure: it is therefore a matter in which I consider medical advice is necessary. It has been taken for granted that it is perfectly natural and a new discovery of nature, but it inevitably involves reactions which are not the usual physiological reactions.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: In regard to the middle period, do you suggest that that is safe? Lord Dawson has suggested the opposite?—Well, the middle period is the one taught by Dr. Marie Stopes, and I do not think it is the right period at all, and that is borne out by experience. I think the period during which conception is least likely to occur is from the 21st to the 28th day, and that is upheld very much by the fact that for centuries now it has been the custom to calculate and work on the assumption that conception is so much more likely to have taken place in the first week, that you can practically take it as a fact, and it works out so and the

very physiological facts also confirm it. There is very little chance of one ovum remaining free in the body by about the third week, and it is proved by experience that that week is very unfertile. This theory was confirmed by the work done by Seigel during the war, when he observed the dates of conception of a series of children born: he did not find a single child in his series that had been conceived in that week.

MRS. CLAY: Has that been followed out?—It is not easy to find out exact dates of conception except in war time when two days' leave was given and therefore the dates could be traced. I might add that I have found out that if a young couple decide together about abstention, it appears to work out very satisfactorily. I do not think I have ever met a woman who *wanted* to use contraceptives. Women use them, but they have told me that they have only used them because their husbands have wished them to. In some instances women have gone so far as to say: "I am so sick of the whole business that I almost would rather my husband had a mistress to go to than that I should be obliged to go on using these things; if I could be natural and have children when they came I would not mind."

THE CHAIRMAN: Is it your experience that there is a repugnance on the part of women to the use of contraceptives?—I think there is, but I think that is more strong

in the more primitive woman than in the educated woman.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: I do not feel that I have quite understood what really is your fundamental objection to the use of contraceptives?—I think possibly if you come down to what is primitive instinct, it is the same sort of primitive instinct (though perhaps a curious thing for a doctor to say) which would make me absolutely refuse to take any unnecessary medicine or have an unnecessary operation. Nature should be left alone unless we are quite sure that we are going to aid her.

DR. LORTHOUSE: Lord Dawson condemns very strongly the method of withdrawal from the point of view of health. Do you associate yourself with that?—Yes, I do; I think it is bad, especially for the woman.

## V

BY MISS MAUDE ROYDEN

My views on birth control are very tentative "half-way" ones, first because I am not married and feel that the question of the nervous strain imposed on married people by long-continued abstinence from intercourse is one which it is practically impossible for an unmarried person to gauge; and, secondly, because I believe that we have no adequate scientific knowledge to guide us yet. I believe that the *average* man and woman are not quite *normal* about sex; I think most of us are rather unnaturally over-sexed, and over-preoccupied with sex, and that this greatly complicates the question of birth control.

Subject to these very serious limitations my views are roughly:—

1. That some form of birth control is necessary; because very few people can afford to marry young if they are to look forward to having a child born every year; because such frequent child-bearing is too great a strain both physically and in other ways on the mother; and because the children do not get

a sufficiently prolonged babyhood or sufficiently individual care if they come every year.

2. I believe the ideal method of birth control to be abstinence except when a child is desired.

3. Nevertheless I am in favour of the use of contraceptives where the alternative is (a) unfaithfulness or alienation on the part of the partner who refuses to use self-control or remains unconvinced that it is either necessary or right. (b) Undue nervous strain where self-control is exercised or attempted. (c) The birth of an unwanted child. (d) The birth of a diseased child. (e) The exhaustion by child-bearing of the mother. (f) Indefinite postponement of marriage, unless the number of children to be born can be limited.

4. Considering that these dangers are exceedingly serious, I advocate the dissemination of knowledge on the subject of contraceptives, and of birth control generally, by properly qualified medical men and women. I believe that this knowledge should be given not only to the rich but to the poor, and that doctors at clinics should be not only allowed but definitely instructed to give it where it is asked for.

DR. LOFTHOUSE: Have you formed this judgment about some form of birth control being necessary by the experience of a good many young married couples?—Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And is it assumed by



those young married couples that, given the necessity of some kind of birth control, contraceptives follow as a matter of course?—Not at all; some of them practise birth control by abstention.

MRS. CLAY: Have you seen some of those who have adopted abstention improving in their general character or deteriorating?—I think they are apt to get on each other's nerves when they abstain, and I think that is largely due to being badly housed and badly civilised. I might give you the case of a couple who were married before the war and had two children, the second one being born after the outbreak of war, when the man was out in India. The wife nearly died and the doctor told her not to have any more children. She took it that that meant there was to be no more intercourse, and the husband coming back from India found that according to her views she must either risk death, or they must never live again as married people. He said he did not agree, and that he had suffered a great nervous strain for four and a half years, and now he had come back she expected him to live with her in a state completely unnatural. They cared for each other so much and she was so convinced that he was wrong, that he said he would accept her opinion; but that if she had the faintest notion of what she was demanding of him, he was convinced that she would not demand it. She came to me, and I said that

under the circumstances she was putting an intolerable strain on her husband

I read Lord Dawson's evidence, and I think that what he says on this point is not necessarily correct, and I speak from the experience of my friends. I know of a young married couple who are convinced that intercourse should only take place, not only when you are willing to have a child, but when you actually desire and intend to have a child. They have had three children at intervals of three years, and they appear to be quite normal young people, although they are perhaps rather more gifted than the average. They live perfectly ordinary lives, and they tell me that all the time they have been married (twelve years) they have always slept in the same bed, and when they sleep out of doors, as they like to do, they always sleep in the same sleeping sack. They say that they have not found this way of life a strain, and are quite convinced still that it is for them the right way to live. They do not deny each other physical caresses, or nearness. I admit, however, that their way is exceptional so far as I know.

MRS CLAY Do you think it fair that because so many of these cases do not come up, to say they are very exceptional?—No, I do not think it is fair to dogmatise.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT Do you think among the working classes that such a case would be exceptional?—Yes, very exceptional.

Do you think there is any ethical objection to the use of contraceptives as such?—I think I do, it is a case of the frustration of nature.

DR. SULLIVAN: Is it your experience that married women have a strong aversion to the use of contraceptives?—I have not found that, but I think a doctor would have a wider experience than I. I will say, however, that when a married couple deliberately come together and use contraceptives in such a way that they would not have any children, that seems to me wrong. It is not a marriage, it is prostitution.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: You say you have had great experience with young people. What is your experience of a young man and a young woman who cannot marry but wish to live together?—I have told them it is wrong. You cannot separate one thing from the other and say that, of all marriage means, you will take one—physical satisfaction—irrespective of all the rest. I have never suggested that people should marry and have no children at all.

If it is only a question of time, where is the wrong of meeting together and having a mistress?—There is the mutual sense of responsibility, the fact that it ought to be a permanent relationship.

MRS. CLAY: You would allow that nature or the Almighty ordained the instinct for sex life in order that the race might be preserved?

—I do not know what the Almighty had in His mind I can only say that I try to convince them that the consequence of sexual intercourse outside marriage is a certain sense of irresponsibility to one another, by which personality is cheapened and coarsened I am speaking of the young people who believe that that union is going to be for ever They say "We are not interested in the Church or the State This is purely a personal affair between ourselves, we intend to be faithful to one another" I tell them they are not taking on a final responsibility for one another and that that reacts on their relationship, so that when they get tired of one another the whole thing loses its meaning and they drift apart In the end the whole relationship becomes cheapened I had a young couple who stated they intended to enter into a trial marriage and if they suited each other they were going to marry My point is that that is wrong because they are trying to escape the final responsibility

DR BOND Where you know they have practised the use of contraceptives have you noticed any deterioration in their character?—No

SIR JAMES MARCHANT It has been generally said that procreation sanctifies sexual intercourse?—I say that love alone sanctifies it

Does saying that there must never be intercourse without the birth of children actually lower the notion that love is the supreme

thing that sanctifies?—Put it this way: people want intercourse and contraceptives are used, with the result that they avoid the result of that intercourse. If people persist in taking the satisfaction and then frustrating the consequences, it may lead to a lowering of standards. If they are determined to have all the physical pleasure of marriage and shirk the responsibility of children altogether, there would be deterioration, I think.

I feel that as long as that terrible paragraph remains in the Anglican service that marriage is "the remedy for sin," the idea that a woman must never refuse her husband or even demur, will remain, and it seems to me this form of submission in sexual matters of the female to the male is a reversal of natural law.

I do not think that ultimately society will be the worse for people knowing about contraceptives.

DR. BOND: On this question of abstaining as a measure of protection in working classes, is it possible? It means almost total abstinence. You do not regard that as a solution of the problem in any sense?—No.

And on the psychological aspect, what is your experience in regard to this question of abstinence, where it has been practised, on the character and mental stability of the people?—My impression is that generally the strain is very great and there is apt to be friction and alienation, but certainly not always.

## VI

By HAROLD COX

*(Editor of The Edinburgh Review)*

### THE ATTITUDE OF THEOLOGICIANS TOWARDS BIRTH CONTROL

THE main reasons for birth control can be stated in very few words

In practice, unless married couples employ methods of birth control, babies succeed one another so rapidly that the mother has not time to recover her strength and the children are deprived of the full benefit of a mother's care. In the poorer classes the too rapid production of babies means misery for the whole family. Sometimes a family of five or six persons has only one room in which to live, sometimes only one bed in which to sleep. Under such conditions no parent can desire a large family. If many are born many will certainly die, and in the poorer classes the death of a baby is often welcomed. It is sometimes called "churchyard luck." How grave this evil is can be inferred from figures given by Mr W. A. Appleton, Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions, in his report dated February, 1923. Dealing

with health conditions in Dundee, Mr. Appleton says that eleven women who were visited had between them given birth to seventy-eight children, of whom forty-nine had died. One woman had given birth to 12 children, all of whom had died.

Even where the circumstances of the parents are comfortable, there should be at least two years' interval between successive births. More generally, it is desirable that so serious a matter as the bringing of new beings into the world should be the result of conscious intention and not of mere chance. But unless methods of birth control are employed, chance alone decides whether the woman becomes pregnant, with the result that many children are born unwanted by their parents, often amid surroundings that give them little prospect of a healthy and happy life.

These personal aspects of the problem apply to the whole world. In addition there are in England to-day grave national reasons for reducing the birth rate. As the present Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, pointed out in a speech at Cambridge in February, 1924, the island in which we live "has a population too large and over-industrialised" (*Morning Post*, March 1st, 1924). This population, already too large, is increasing at the rate of 5,000 to 6,000 a week by excess of births over deaths. The only humane way of dealing with this grave national problem is to reduce the number of births, and the only practical way

of securing this end lies in the general adoption of methods of birth control.

The practice of birth control diminishes the anxiety and adds to the health of married women; it improves the physique and the life-prospects of children, it tends to lessen the grave national danger of over-population.

Why then do theologians oppose this movement? I will deal *seriatim* with the arguments which I find that in practice they employ.

1. They say that birth control is "unnatural." But so is the wearing of clothes and the habit of living in houses. Marriage itself is unnatural. The progress of the world depends on man's success in modifying the forces of nature to suit human convenience. The only "natural" people are those who live and behave like savages. This same type of argument, it may be added, was at one time used to condemn as "unnatural" and therefore wicked the employment of anaesthetics to diminish the woman's pain in childbirth.

2. Regardless of the present size of our population, many theologians continue to quote the Biblical text "Be fruitful and multiply." According to the Book of Genesis this injunction was given to Noah and his sons immediately after the Flood at a time when there were only eight persons on the earth. Its relevance to modern conditions is not obvious. Nor is it easy to see how



priests can reconcile the continued quotation of this text with the practice of celibacy.

3. Equally frequent is the appeal to the Biblical story of Onan. Theologians habitually treat this story as a conclusive condemnation of the practice of birth control. In so doing they disregard the obvious meaning of the words of the Bible. If any person will take the trouble to read carefully the 38th chapter of the Book of Genesis and to compare it with the 25th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy he will see that the offence for which the Lord slew Onan was his refusal to raise up seed to his brother. These chapters make it perfectly clear that, when an elder brother died Jewish custom required the next brother to marry the widow and to beget offspring from her. The first-born child was then regarded as the child of the deceased brother. Onan objected to begetting a child that would not be his, and therefore took measures to prevent conception. But the words of the Bible make it clear that his sin would have been the same if he had abstained altogether from connection.

The story goes on to relate how the disappointed widow next tried to obtain the third brother for a husband. Failing to do so, she disguised herself as a harlot and waited at a spot where her father-in-law—the head of the tribe—was likely to pass. The plan was successful, and she conceived. When her father-in-law a few months later heard

that she was with child he ordered that she should be brought forth and burnt. Fortunately she was able to prove that the expected child was his. And then everything ended happily. She had twins, and in due course of time the father of the illegitimate twins, who was also the father of the woman's two deceased husbands, died at a ripe old age in the odour of sanctity. It is curious that this quaint story of primeval Judaism should be used as a basis for religious dogmatism by modern theologians.

4 Many theologians assert that the sole purpose of marriage is the procreation of offspring. This assertion happens to be in direct conflict with the teaching of St. Paul. In chapter vii of the first Book of Corinthians, St. Paul deals very fully with the question of marriage. He says not a word about procreation. What he does say is "To avoid fornication let every man have his own wife and every woman her own husband." He emphasises the same point of view in the words "It is better to marry than to burn." Thus St. Paul, while regarding celibacy as the highest state, recognised that sexual desire was an overmastering instinct and sanctioned marriage as the best means of gratifying that desire. I find it impossible to understand how in face of this emphatic statement by St. Paul any clergyman can continue to assert that the only purpose of marriage is procreation.

5 Some theologians, deliberately ignoring

the doctrine laid down by St. Paul, try to find an argument in the facts of nature for the proposition that sexual intercourse is only allowable for the purposes of procreation. They rightly state that the desire for sexual intercourse is an instinct implanted in all animals to secure the continuance of the race. They then proceed to argue that since God created the sexual instinct for the specific purpose of race preservation it is an interference with the Divine Will if man indulges that instinct for any other purpose than the *procreation of offspring*. This argument is superficially plausible; but it overlooks the fairly obvious fact that procreation is not the necessary and inevitable result of every act of sexual gratification. Married couples eagerly desiring a child often live together for many months before the wanted child is conceived. Conception is never a certainty. It depends on the chance that a microscopic male germ may collide at the right moment with a microscopic female germ. Equally significant is the fact that after conception has taken place, husband and wife may frequently enjoy the mutual pleasure of sexual intercourse though obviously no new child can then be created. If then we accept the Christian belief that all the instincts and capacities of man are the deliberate work of the Divine Creator, it follows that God Almighty has deliberately endowed men and women with the power of enjoying sexual

gratification under circumstances when conception may not—and even cannot—ensue. When God has thus created man, by what right do theologians assert that the sole purpose of sexual intercourse is the procreation of offspring?

6. To this question some theologians reply by saying that what they condemn is the use of artificial methods to diminish the chances of conception; this is the interference with the Divine Will of which they complain. The value of this contention can be tested by a simple analogy. God has given man the capacity to enjoy sea bathing; but that enjoyment is accompanied with the risk of drowning. Is it then an interference with the Divine Will for man to learn to swim or to use a life-belt? In the matter of sexual relationship God has created in man two separate instincts—the desire for pleasure and the desire for children; God has made these two instincts distinguishable and distinct. Why then is it a sin against God for man to take measures to secure the distinction?

7. The final argument of the theologians is that even if birth control is in itself morally justifiable, it is socially dangerous because it may lead to sexual immorality by removing the risk of conception. The argument would be more convincing if sexual irregularity were a new phenomenon in the world's history, and were directly traceable to the spread of birth control knowledge. This hypothesis is

contradicted by well-known facts. Prostitution has existed from time immemorial in all countries of the world; stories of marital infidelity are to be found in the oldest literature as well as in modern divorce courts; the birth of illegitimate children has been a constant incident in all ages. Therefore the implication that the world's standard of sexual morality is going to be suddenly lowered if men and women learn how to prevent unwanted children is entirely without foundation.

Possibly some unmarried women who would hesitate to run the risk of having a child might decide to indulge their inclinations if that risk were removed. On the other hand, many unmarried men who now consort with prostitutes would marry at an earlier age if they knew how to avoid begetting an excessive family. It is at least possible that on balance there would be fewer free lovers and more happy marriages. But in any case the social mischief resulting from irregular unions not resulting in childbirth, is insignificant in comparison with the hideous evils that follow the production of unwanted babies. Thousands of married women, especially in the poorer classes, live in constant terror of a fresh conception. That terror makes them regard their husbands as tyrants rather than as lovers, and destroys the mutual affection on which married life should rest. If an unwanted conception occurs the woman in

despair often has recourse to abortion. Those theologians who condemn birth control appear to shut their eyes to the fact that the practice of abortion is widespread throughout the world. Married women would no longer be driven to seek refuge in this dangerous practice if they were taught satisfactory methods of birth control.

As above pointed out, the evils that follow unregulated procreation affect not only the individual woman and the individual family, but the whole nation. To argue that these evils are to be allowed to continue for all time, lest a comparatively small number of unmarried women should enter into irregular unions, suggests that there is a serious lack of humanity in the theological mind. In effect the theologian says that he does not care how much needless misery may be imposed upon the world, provided only that the unmarried woman is kept to the straight path by the fear of conception. Married women are to suffer lest the unmarried should err. Incidentally the doctrine involves a complete inversion of the Christian view of child bearing. The generally accepted Christian view is that children are sent by God as a blessing to their parents, the theologian evidently believes that God's primary purpose in sending children is to punish sin.

The explanation of this curious attitude seems to be that many modern theologians

have inherited the view of some of the early Christians that sexual indulgence is in itself sinful. That view probably arose as a protest against the excessive glorification of sex which was common in the pagan world. It led to propositions which even the sternest of modern theologians would hesitate to set forth in plain words. For example, St. Augustine wrote: "No fruitfulness of the flesh can be compared with holy virginity." St. Jerome said: "Wedded women may congratulate themselves that they are next to virgins." St. Thomas Aquinas is even more explicit; he expresses regret that, as the result of original sin, conception can only take place at the cost of virginity. In a word, the early Christian fathers regarded sexual intercourse as a nasty unholy thing that ought to be avoided altogether if only it were possible to produce children without this act. That view still lingers, perhaps in a somewhat milder form, in the minds of modern theologians. Yet the same theologians profess to believe that all human instincts are divinely implanted.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before we embark on the discussion I think I ought to express some disappointment that Mr. Cox has so largely concerned himself with the theological aspects of the matter, apart from the economic in which he is so distinguished an expert. And further, I cannot accept the theological positions which he criticises as in any degree an adequate

presentation of modern theological thought on this difficult subject

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME Do you think these special institutions of very large families quoted from Mr Appleton and other sources, are they not extraordinarily exceptional?—No, there are still large families in the large towns, the slum areas, but in the rural districts the large families have gone out of fashion

I see it is stated that the time for teaching birth control has gone by, and really, we have to be afraid of a stationary population Do you agree?—No, what I think we want in England is a reduced population

Would you like to go below the present population?—Yes! England is much too full I think we should go back below 30 millions

THE CHAIRMAN Should we not regard our population from the Imperial point of view? Australia and Canada are under populated and we want a better distribution of population?—Can you tell me how we can shift ten millions of people to Australia or Canada?

THE CHAIRMAN I do not think the question of emigration has been adequately taken in hand by the Government, but now all kinds of schemes are being formulated, so we are at the beginning of a new movement?—All my information is that although the Australian Government have publicly said that they want British settlers they are quietly opposing immigration



SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLM. Would you regard it as well to go back from industrialism to agricultural life?—That is one of the biggest problems in the world to day. Excessive industrialisation is going on all over the world, and I think it is very unhealthy, but how are you to combat it? I confess I cannot see

As a substitute for the reduction of families on a general scale, would you be inclined to go into some system of endowment of families?—I think it is a horrible idea that parents should be paid by the State to produce children

Don't you think as matters now stand, the result is that single people who do not need as much money get as much money as those bringing three or four children into the world?—I think it is a bad thing that the duty of supporting children should be transferred from the parents to the State

The married women as a rule do not have children except on an average of one in two or three or even four years?—That is certainly not the case among the poorer classes

Those are exceptional cases which impress themselves on your mind. They are not the cases which rule the whole community. I have before me some figures from Scotland where in the early days of registration one could ascertain the number of children up to a given number of wives at different ages, and for the period from fifteen to twenty

years there was a child on an average of once in every two years. When the age was thirty to thirty four, it was once in three years or rather less, so taking the whole of married life together, it was considerably less frequent than one child in three years. Does that not minimise the severity of this question altogether?—It is all the more reason for helping the poor women who are among these hard cases.

Would you be inclined to limit the help to those hard cases?—No, I would limit it to the people who want to know.

THE CHAIRMAN I gather that Mr Cox would be in favour on economic grounds of reducing the population from 40,000,000 to 30,000,000 and thus, I think, the natural conclusion would be the widespread propaganda of birth control by every possible means?—Yes.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT Would you stop at that figure?—I think the population is too large for the happiness of the people.

THE CHAIRMAN A movement set on foot with that end in view, and which would have any chance of achieving it, would go too far?—I do not see why you should anticipate that danger. In any case the future is less serious than the present suffering endured by the poorer classes who are breeding a vast number of unfit children.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME What do you suggest by unfit? Do you suggest that the

great mass of working classes are inferior to our own social status?—A great many children born in the slums are remarkably fit. One must admit that fact, but at the same time a great many feeble-minded and unhealthy children are also born.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: Would you not suggest that the best thing to do is to improve the surroundings?—Will you explain how you are going to improve the surroundings?

I admit it is a slow process. My first item of improvement would be to stop the drinking?—I think that would be a great pity myself.

The mere fact of stopping the beer in this country would give every working family in the country 8s. a week to buy food and pay rent?—Including those who are already drinking no beer?

DR. GILLIE: Without an extensive knowledge of birth control, or only a natural extension of birth control, is it true that the children of the working classes have very much better health than they did twenty years ago?—I think that is so, but you must remember that a good many working-class families do exercise birth control. I know they do in the villages.

I wanted to ascertain whether there had been progress and improvement without the official introduction of this remedy?—I am rather shy of anything official.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: Then you do not

want it to be a national policy?—I think the nation should approve of the policy.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: But unless somebody interferes, the information is not available for the people who require it?—Then the proper thing would be for the medical profession to make the practice of giving that information. I think in any family where the woman is having a family too rapidly, the doctor should tell the woman how she can avoid conception, but many doctors do not.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: You say that many people in the villages practise it. Is it very common?—Very common indeed.

REV. CANON SIMPSON: You regard it as an ascertained fact that this great fall in the country families is due to the practice of contraception?—Certainly.

MRS. CLAY: How is that arrived at, because it is most difficult to find these things out?—Many men will talk frankly about it.

Then is that not a reason for not needing to disseminate this knowledge?—There are some who still have not the necessary knowledge. There is also the question of what method should be used. You want to teach the woman the best method, because very often the husband comes home drunk and the woman is at his mercy.

MRS. CADBURY: On page two of your *précis* you say that marriage itself is unnatural. I cannot see why marriage is unnatural. I

should have thought as far as our tradition goes, it is the one thing that was natural?—Nature did not institute marriage.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: The institution of marriage is for the guarding and safeguarding of natural relationship?—All institutions are intended to improve upon nature, and are therefore contrary to nature, or unnatural.

Of course you do not mean by this that the only natural people are those who live as savages?—My criticism is directed against the use of the word unnatural as a term of abuse. Thus used it has no value. In previous generations an illegitimate child was called a natural child, implying that to marry for the purpose of begetting a child was unnatural.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: You think birth control is just as natural as marriage?—Yes.

And it is just as natural to have sexual intercourse without procreation as with?—Exactly.

MRS. CLAY: Then you allow self-control to come in?—Always. I think self-control must guide our lives.

Man must be master of himself?—Yes.

You do allow that self-control is all a part of the plan of the carrying out of the complex nature of man?—Yes, certainly.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: But does not nature all the time impose self-control?—Yes, otherwise you go to pieces.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: How can sexual

pleasure be said to be distinct from procreation when physically they are due to the same organ?—Because you can use that organ for the pleasure alone, or for the pleasure plus the procreation.

Still God has made them by the same organ, which fully used, has the same result?—Nevertheless, they are distinguishable and they are distinct.

You must also deal with the fact that they are physically united?—But separable.

Here you are proposing not to complete the act. The complete act is the physical unity to both these things by nature?—No, the complete act need not result in a child.

It is not separated from the possibility?—No, the risk is there, and by birth control you control the risk in your favour.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: In 50 cases or more out of 100 procreation does not follow?—I should think that was quite likely.

Then is it more normal for it not to take place than for it to take place?—Certainly, more than 50 per cent. of the intercourse which takes place is not followed by a child.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: Surely not very normal but very usual?—I should have thought that if nature wanted each act to be followed by a child, there would have been no chance of escape.

If nature wanted to separate them, there should be different organs for the two things?

—If nature has blundered, why should we not deal with the matter?

And there is no law of nature about it?—Do you really suggest as a practical proposition, that after a child is once conceived the husband and wife should not have intercourse again until the child has been born and they want to beget another one?

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: The two things are united in one act and the separation of the act is a thing to be argued?—They are not always united. Why should you not use your own discretion to disunite them?

Do you approve of that all through marriage?—Yes, I think it would be a good thing for all the people.

You do not grant that there is an ethical issue involved?—I cannot see it.

DR. BOND: I think we are clear about Mr. Cox's position and the ethical point of view, but there is the practical point, and I gather, Mr. Cox, you would advocate a fairly extensive propaganda of the use of the methods of birth control in the population. Well, now, that being so, have you any anxiety in your mind, in regard to the lower strata, how far it would be possible to get the least responsible section of the population to practise what is regarded as a useful method?—I think that is a very important point. The difficulty is that there are some people so low down that you cannot get them to take any precaution for their own improvement, they are too degraded.

What do you suggest?—I think all you can do is to have women doctors going round telling them.

I mean the class above the sterilisable-by-law class?—I quite realise the position, and I can only suggest that many women now are doing a great deal of good work in the poorer districts and they might extend their work.

On the question of the incidence of abortion in this country, what statistical evidence do you think there is of the relative amount of abortion among married and unmarried women?—I do not know of any statistics, but there is little doubt that abortion is very common among married women.

And of course it would be an argument in favour of birth control to reduce abortion?—Undoubtedly.



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## VII

### STATEMENT BY THE HON. BERTRAND RUSSELL, F.R.S., ON BEHALF OF THE WORKERS' BIRTH CONTROL GROUP

I COME before you on behalf of The Workers' Birth Control Group, a society whose members belong to the Labour Party and affiliated organisations. The Committee and most of the members are women, and the distinctive aim of the Group is to present the subject from the point of view of the working mother. It is a little difficult for a man to do justice to this point of view, and I must beg your indulgence for my shortcomings.

The immediate objective of the Group is to endeavour to induce the Ministry of Health to allow the medical officers at Health Centres to give birth-control information when they consider it desirable. At present they may not do so, even when they consider that a woman's state of health makes it important, or that a child is likely to be diseased. The further objective of the group is to make child-bearing in the wage-earning class, as it already is among the well-to-do, a deliberate choice, rather than an accident or even (as

sometimes) an undesired calamity. The grounds upon which they rely may be classified under four heads: I Health of children, II Health of mothers, III Happiness in marriage, IV The importance of removing the present class discrimination in the matter of birth control.

The population argument, usually put forward in this connection, is by no means rejected by the Group, but is not the one upon which they specially rely. Speaking for myself, I attach great importance to it. The old checks to the growth of population—plague, pestilence, infant mortality—are happily diminishing, and we all hope that they will diminish much farther. Correlative to this diminution in the death rate, a diminution in the birth rate seems necessary if we are not to reach the point where famine will again become operative. However, I do not propose to say anything more on this aspect.

*I Health of Children*—There can be no doubt that large families, involving overcrowding and under nourishment, lead to a larger death rate in early years than is found where families are small.<sup>1</sup> This is not only due to the fact that the enfeebled mother is less likely to bear strong children, but often that she is less able to take care of those she has. This, of course is especially true in the poorest sections of the population. Apart

<sup>1</sup> Statistics on this subject would be very valuable.

from this general consideration, there is the fact that many children are born syphilitic or imbecile. When it is known to the medical officer at a Health Centre that a woman has had a child suffering from venereal disease, and there is every reason to think that, unless there is an interval for treatment, the next child will be similarly afflicted, it is difficult to understand how any humane person can say that the health authorities must do nothing to prevent the birth of another unfortunate, doomed to a life of misery, with no alleviation except the probability of an early death; yet that is the present attitude of the Health Ministry, no matter what Party may be in power. And it is surely not in the public interest to increase the supply of imbeciles unnecessarily.

II. *Health of Mothers.*—This aspect is bound up with the health of the children, since it is obviously bad for children to have mothers whose health has been undermined by too frequent pregnancies. Most women—even very healthy women—need a period of rest and recuperation after the strain of pregnancy and nursing. Among the well-to-do, this is recognised, and it is no longer common to find children occurring oftener than once in two years. But mothers in the wage-earning classes, as a rule, do not know how to secure this result. The death-rate of women in childbirth is 4 per 1000; the annual death-rate of miners through accidents is 1.1 per

1000 It is thus about four times as dangerous to bear a child as to spend a year as a miner, yet mining is recognised as the most dangerous of men's trades

One very grave consequence of the present ignorance as to methods of birth control is the prevalence of abortion and of unsuccessful attempts at abortion Exact statistics on this matter cannot be obtained, since people endeavour to preserve secrecy in order to escape the legal penalties But all doctors engaged in public health work hold that an enormous number of cases which result in death or injury to the mother are due to attempts at abortion In industrial areas, this practice appears to be on the increase The report of Dr Janet Campbell on "Maternal Mortality" (published 1924) mentions abortion as one of the main causes of death in childbirth and from puerperal fever, it is suggested that this cause is responsible for something like a third of such deaths in certain industrial towns In all such cases, it would surely be better that the unwanted children should never be conceived

The Workers' Birth Control Group regard birth control as an essential part of the ante-natal care of mothers, as such it should form part of the regular work of Welfare Centres They do not desire that marriages should be childless, and they profess no views as to what is the right number of children per marriage But they consider that children

ought to come because they are desired, and at such intervals as are best for the health of the children and their mother. In every other department of life, it is agreed that scientific knowledge should be diffused and utilised. We do not object to machine production or to medicine on the ground that they are contrary to nature. But in this one respect there is an attempt to withhold knowledge from those who desire it. In this matter we have the support of "Public Health," the journal of the doctors who work under the Ministry of Health. In an article in the issue of July 1924, this journal says, *à propos* of birth control :

"All efforts in the past to prevent the spread of scientific knowledge have failed ignominiously. . . . No one suggests, and no one has ever suggested, the publication of these details upon the house-tops, or the education of young people in matters in which they are not at all interested. On the other hand, every person should have free access to this knowledge, and it should not be obtainable by the wealthy and at the same time forbidden to the poor owing to their lack of means. . . . With regard to birth control, it should be common knowledge that this is a physiological process easily controlled, and the methods of carrying out such control should be made available to every one interested, on application. It is impossible to believe that the perpetuation of ignorance upon these vital

subjects is likely to be of any benefit either to the morals or to the mental and physical development of the nation ”

In particular, it seems to the Group that women, who by receiving the vote receive the status of equal citizenship, are entitled to scientific information so vital to themselves

III *Happiness in Marriage*—Those who have experience of the lives of married working women are agreed that fear of pregnancy very often makes a woman dread intercourse, with the result that her relations with her husband become embittered The following instance, supplied by a doctor from personal experience, may serve as typical

Mrs T, aged 34

Married at 17, has had 18 pregnancies with 11 live children Husband a hawker, often away from home, does not attempt to support his family Mother does this by hawking lace Three youngest children puny and backward, unable to walk have to be taken out with mother on her rounds in a perambulator

Housing accommodation 1 living, 2 bedrooms father has single bed, and 2 eldest boys sleep on floor in 1st bedroom mother shares flock mattress without sheets or blankets with 6 youngest children (her last confinement being conducted under these conditions) the others sleep in living-room



Mother and all children very clean and well-cared for as far as possible

Refuses intercourse with her husband until he overpowers her has asked him to take other women During last pregnancies has done everything she knew to procure an abortion Cannot go away from home for confinements because youngest children must be looked after all the time

*This is an extreme case, but it is obvious that married life is much happier when the husband and wife can choose how many children they will have, and at what intervals. It cannot be desirable that women should hate their husbands, yet this is often the result of too frequent pregnancies.*

*IV The Present Class Discrimination — At present, married men and women who can afford to consult a private practitioner can and do find out whatever they wish to know about birth control. But the poorer sections of the community cannot obtain the knowledge in this way. Nor can they obtain it in hospitals, even when the hospital doctors have already informed them that another pregnancy will probably prove fatal, the request for information is refused, often with insults. The only way in which the information can be made generally available to those working women who have good reason to ask for it is through the Health Centres. This has the additional advantage that the women are*

personally known at these centres, and there is no reason to fear the dissemination of the knowledge for immoral purposes. Private clinics, of which there are three in London and one in the North, are good so far as they go, but can only cope with a very limited number of cases. The group is strongly of opinion, however, that separate clinics should be no more than temporary expedients pending action through the Maternity Centres. Literature is a very unsatisfactory method of dealing with women who have not had much education.

It is sometimes said that, because a section of the population disapproves of birth control, therefore the public authorities must not give information to those who do not belong to this section. Such an argument would make an end of all State activities. Christian Scientists disapprove of medicine, Quakers disapprove of armaments, yet the State supports both medicine and armaments. No one proposes to force information upon those who do not desire it, but they have no right to tyrannise over the men and women who do desire it, and who, in the opinion of the public health authorities, ought to have it. We ask for freedom for doctors in public health centres in their dealings with patients. In no other matter would a doctor be forbidden to give information which he considers medically desirable.

THE CHAIRMAN I will now ask you to

amplify or elaborate the memorandum in any way you desire?—I do not think there is anything much more I wish to say, but I should like to ask the indulgence of the Committee when I point out the difficulty I am in in trying to represent the working woman. The organisation I represent to day is the Workers' Birth Control Group, and is composed mainly of working women. It is quite a recent organisation, founded in the spring, at the Women's Labour Conference, but it is quite extraordinary how much the working women are taking it up. I think it has been a surprise to all the organisers to find out how it has been taken up. They do not look at the question from the point of view of population, which is natural to anyone interested in the economic question, and from that point of view I personally have been interested in it, especially since I was in China, where one rather sees the result of over population. Their point of view is much more the welfare of the family, happiness in married life, healthy children and mothers, actual practical things of that sort, with which they are brought into close contact and, as far as I can see, the great majority of married working women do feel that for the purpose of things which all of us value such as the health of children and their welfare, and the health of mothers, it is extremely desirable that the married working woman should be able to obtain the information in cases where medical

which is urged of indiscriminate dissemination and its getting into hands where it might do harm. There is, I think, a very great deal from every point of view when you go into the working-class family life to be said for the necessity of being able to limit the family for the sake of morality, and for the sake of health, and for all kinds of reasons. For instance, you get great over-crowding. The woman's health undoubtedly suffers, and one knows in our own class it is no longer very common for a woman to have a child a year. In former days it was different; but nowadays it is not common. The working women feel very much that it is impossible for them to care adequately for their children or even to continue to rear healthy children unless they have a proper period of recuperation. Now, of course, it is urged that it would be better if that period were obtained by abstinence, but you have the situation that a woman is not in a position to ensure that for herself; her husband very often is not as considerate as he should be, and to say that that is to be the only method is to say in effect it will not happen. That is why, the women have taken this matter up, because the married working woman is very much in the power of her husband at present, and whatever she might think, it is not open to her to have the thing done how she likes. So it is a counsel of perfection which is not in her power, and it has in many cases the effect of

making a marriage unhappy when it need not be. The woman is in great dread of having more children and gets a violent antipathy against her husband which is not necessary, and is very unfortunate altogether. I think those are the main things that are concerned in this matter primarily, and, first of all, the health of the children, because that requires healthy mothers, and mothers to look after them, and not too much over-crowding and things of that sort. Now, it seems that quite a large proportion of deaths in childbirth are due to unsuccessful attempts at abortion. That is a matter about which you cannot get exact statistics, but that view is borne out in the report of Dr. Janet Campbell on "Maternal Mortality." I have not got the report with me, but you will find passages quoted in the Memorandum on Birth Control which was sent to the Committee members, which shows what she says, and it appears to be, as far as I can make out, the general view, that deliberate abortion is a very common practice, and, of course, a practice caused by the fact that people do not know of any other method of controlling births. That practice is extremely undesirable, and it is one of the arguments for allowing this knowledge to be disseminated that it would diminish that practice. I should like to say that it is a very dangerous thing, and has been shown to be dangerous in practice, to put an embargo upon knowledge, to say of

any knowledge that this knowledge is bad. It is the sort of thing which has always proved bad in the past and I think it will in this matter. It has practically never succeeded, but it has done a lot of harm. That view is borne out by the good work of the Health Centres in disseminating other kinds of scientific information. I think it is a very strong thing to say: Here is knowledge which is not to be allowed to be given to those whom it most concerns. It seems to me to be one of the main points in the matter. Of course, some people consider that the whole thing is immoral—well, as to that I should say that different sections of the community consider various things immoral, and if there is a divergence of opinion as to what is immoral you have no right to say that one section shall legislate for the other. Where you have a very large section of the population taking one view and another section taking another, you have a case where each section must have its rights. You cannot protect small minorities if you are to carry on Governments and where you get all sorts of opinions.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: Take the thing, homo-sexuality. That is criminal in this country; do you think it should be penalised?—That is a question which depends how public opinion is on the matter. I should have said that in ancient Greece, it would be unwise to penalise it because public opinion would not have supported you, but in this country it does.

anxiety in regard to this nation or any other nation or community being in a position to control the movement and at the right stage preventing it passing over into not having enough children? What faith has he in the future in regard to that?—I have faith in human instinct as to that. My impression of people is that most people like to have a certain number of children, but not a vast number, and the few who feel otherwise would soon be eliminated and you would not have a population of that sort.

It would be, then, that you would rely on that, and not on legislation to prevent it going any further?—You cannot legislate to compel people to have children.

Can you tell us, Mr. Russell, what is the relation in regard to numbers of attempts at abortion amongst unmarried women as compared with married women?—I am afraid I cannot.

But that is of material value?—That is not a subject in which I am in any way an expert. I should like to say that the Committee of this Organisation consists of married women who have children, and they are not in any way out to say it is a good thing not to have children; that is not their line.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does Mr. Russell know whether the women whom he represents look at the matter from the ethical point of view?—Yes, they would say that the ethical point of view is at the bottom of the whole thing,

and the primary duty of the parents is to give their children a good chance in the world, and the proper parental care of children is quite impossible unless combined with birth control. They are strongly imbued with extreme ethical fervour.

You say, Mr Russell, that, given decent economic conditions for our population, the ideal method would be self-restraint, but you emphasise the difficulty of inducing the husbands to exercise a reasonable unselfishness towards their wives, and as that appears to be impossible, there is nothing but to fall back on birth control? Though from the ideal ethical point of view, self control on the part of both parents would be the best means of dealing with the situation, we all feel that the economic conditions are so shocking in many regions of the population that the tendency to fall back on mechanical methods is irresistible. Would you still maintain that the ideal would be a proper self-control on the part of both partners in marriage?—That I think is a difficult question. I was not prepared to say definitely that I thought that was the ideal. I was saying, assuming that that was the ideal, the argument was as it stood. I know the question is a difficult one, and I can see arguments both ways as to what would be the ideal.

DR GILLIE. I am not quite clear whether this Birth Control Committee would be satisfied if permission was given to the clinical



officers to give the information when asked? As far as I understand their contention, they want it to be given when asked, and when there is a special reason, such as children being born with venereal disease; they want the information primarily in exceptional cases of that sort, or where a woman is almost certain to die from another confinement. You find cases where a woman goes to a hospital for confinement, and they tell her that if she has another child, she will die, and she says: "How am I to prevent it?" and they say: "I can't inform you."

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that the attitude of the hospitals?—Yes.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: I should like to know whether such an answer as was given in this particular case would ordinarily be given in regard to a woman—if she had another baby and she would probably die, would the doctor say that that was none of his business? Is that a likely answer in the hospital, Dr. Bond?

DR. BOND: I do not know; that wants very carefully answering. It rests so much with what are the personal attitudes of the different medical officers to this problem. The opinion has been so largely prejudiced, and while I think that the majority of medical women would wish to give such advice to save life and promote welfare, views are getting warped in regard to this question, and they refrain because it might be thought

they would side with one party or the other.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: I cannot understand any doctor refraining from giving advice necessary to save life even if that meant giving advice on artificial prevention?—I am not talking about private practitioners, but I know that is the normal practice.

DR. BOND: It would become a question for the superior officer, who was the house physician, and not the junior man who might not know.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: The Maternity Centres are official, and there are voluntary hospitals which are not official?—I am talking about voluntary hospitals. I have known cases where a woman, having been told, has asked for advice and the reply has been: "We are not a brothel."

MRS. CLAY: But would such cases be left in the hands of a rather young or rather modest and retiring house surgeon? Would it not be referred to the specialist at that hospital? Is not he a free man?—That is not the view taken

DR. GILLIE: It has been suggested that there is a large number of cases of working women who have been told that if they have another child they will die, and have been refused information in the hospital. I suggest that a large number of those women are not so poverty-stricken that they cannot afford the 5s for a local practitioner?—They can

afford the 5s., I suppose, but they are uneducated, and having been told at the hospital that no information can be given they imagine that no information can be given.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does not Mr. Russell think that the necessary information is so widely disseminated now that the woman would not have far to go among her neighbours to get it?—That is often said, but in fact is not true. One knows from experience that it is a fact that an immense number of working women are at a loss to get the right information.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: Is that not the worst way of getting information?—More than half the working women still believe that there is no method except abortion. It is said that this information is widespread, but that is not true.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: A medical officer told me that if we tell the women how not to have children, they will tell all their neighbours how not to have children?—Yes, you can see the point of view of the hospital.

MRS. CADBURY: That is one of the difficulties in connection with the clinics, and the general feeling is that it would give the clinics a bad name?—It would not if it was deliberately sanctioned by the Ministry of Health.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: Would you limit it in the clinics to women who ask for the information, and secondly to women concerning whom the doctors in charge thought

it advisable to give the information?—I cannot speak for other people, but certainly in the first instance that would be the idea.

DR CARNEGIE SIMPSON Why these limits?—Partly because of public opinion, and one does not want to go suddenly on with anything. I am not a believer in being rushed about anything.

REV CANON SIMPSON This is all very interesting, but I do not imagine we are going to offer any suggestion to the nation with regard to the duties of medical officers.

THE CHAIRMAN I think it indirectly bears on it, because, after all, it is the moral question which is at the bottom of the whole thing. All this procedure in the hospitals is based on the fear of the moral opinion of supporters and others. I do not think we can divide our investigation into departments, as it comes to the same thing at the bottom.

REV CANON SIMPSON With regard to the embargo on knowledge, I think that this represents the situation. I have a case on which I have intimate knowledge of the man and woman of the clerk class. Married five years, they have got one child, and there have been two miscarriages. This is what happened: the wife went to a doctor and said to him after her second miscarriage had occurred within six months of the first one: "Ought he to refrain?" "No," said the doctor, "that would be unfair to your husband," and he then proceeded to give

instructions as regards contraception. They used this method and the woman is now in the family way again. My point is that it was the moral teaching of the doctor?—That was the private practitioner whom they consulted in a private way, and you say they were of the clerk class, a cut above the working woman, and the point is that there is at present a class discrimination and the man who can afford to pay the private doctor gets information, whereas the poor man cannot. Are you prepared to forbid doctors giving this information to private patients?

The point is that you cannot do it?—Then you cannot get justice. I want to put the poor man on the same level as the rich man.

DR. GIBBS: Might I refer to the last paragraph in your *précis*? I understand what the Group looked forward to was what the memorandum has been asserting, that the knowledge, so far as it is given, should be available at Maternity Centres all over the country?—That is the idea.

I suppose the cases we have been discussing are really exceptional cases?—Certainly. They are fairly common, but, statistically, they are exceptional. In the majority of cases where information has been given it has not been given to secure immunity, but it has been given to secure a smaller number of children. Generally, you want an interval so that there should not be more than one child in two years.

Would Mr Russell suggest that the members of this Birth Control Group feel, as a matter of fact, that the question of abstinence on the part of the husband is a particularly difficult one?—They certainly feel that it is not going to happen.

Even if you do appeal to abstinence in other classes with some amount of success, you cannot do it here?—Take it where a woman has been infected by her husband, that is not the sort of husband who would study the question.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME As regards a child a year, is that not the assumption that appears to underlie your statement that there will be something approximately like a child a year if we do not do something? Is not that erroneous? As a matter of fact, in this country, the average number of children born at child-bearing age is not more than one in three years. In Scotland the average number of babies among wives from fifteen to twenty years was one in two years, twenty to twenty-five years, 42 per cent, twenty-five to thirty years, 36 per cent, thirty to thirty-four years, 30 per cent and, after that, much less frequently. So that even if no preventive methods were adopted, the fertility is not so high as your statements show?—I do not mean to suggest that everybody or even the average person has a child a year, but you would infer that it must be quite common. You would infer from these

figures that it must be common to have a child a year.

Then there are the special cases to be considered and not the average cases?—That is why we think that the Health Centres are a good medium, because through them the woman is known.

On the whole, the excessive death rate is a thing to be improved by better medical attendance rather than by reducing the number of confinements?—I should have thought it was fairly obvious that a woman who has frequent confinements is more likely to suffer from them than a woman who has them more spaced out.

With regard to the abortion question, those cases are exceptional. You would not suggest that one-third of the deaths are due generally to abortion?—I know nothing about the subject; you are taking me out of my depth.

Is there not some confusion between abortion and abortion artificially produced, which need not be the same thing? There may be abortion caused by disease?—I mean by artificial means.

Then I suggest that your figures are exaggerated?—Surely that is generally called miscarriage?

Abortion is generally an early miscarriage, and miscarriage is a premature birth occurring from the seventh month to the ninth month?—I am sure you would always find artificially induced ones.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: Is it not a grave evil to spread this general knowledge of birth control and prohibit the Health Centres from dealing with it?—It is a matter of balancing things. In the first place I do not see how information given individually in these centres to individual people is going to spread it broadcast, and even if it did, I do not think it would do much harm; I am not really concerned to judge whether it would do harm, but it is generally thought that it should not be spread among unmarried people. The whole question of the spreading of this knowledge to all and sundry is entirely different to the spread to married people who have sound reasons. This seems to be a method by which the danger, if existing, can be obviated.

Bishop Gore the other day said it was a breach of natural law and therefore a sin. Would you take up that position?—All medicine is a breach of natural law.

What would be your fundamental objection to birth control?—I have no fundamental objection.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: What is your objection to spreading it?—There is a strong opinion against doing so.

If the thing is properly done and scientifically done, you are putting an embargo on knowledge?—No one wants to thrust knowledge on children.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: Would you object



to the circulation of Dr. Marie Stopes's book?  
—No, I do not object to that.

You would object to this information being put in a simple way and generally circulated?  
—It should not be circulated to those who are not adults.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: How would you stop that?—We propose a different circulation than by literature. We do not think circulating by literature is the best way. The well-to-do people can choose their doctor, and if one would not give them the information they require, then they can go to another. If you want to know it, you can find it out.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: So far as the Workers' Group is concerned, you only ask that it should be circulated at Welfare Centres in special cases by the medical man?  
—Yes. They wish also that he should also be free to give it to those who ask.

MRS. CADBURY: It is the special cases that have brought in this report, and ask for it. They do not ask for it along ordinary lines?—That is so.

MRS. CLAY: What is at the back of a company of clever working women such as would constitute the committee of your Birth Control Group? They ask for this information to be given in clinics and perhaps at hospitals. Is it that they want a little of the stigma attaching to the whole thing removed?  
—They do not feel there is any stigma. I have never come across anybody in the

working classes except Roman Catholics who did think there was stigma attaching to it.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: Your argument is that they can bring up two or three children better than they can six?—I think they can bring up six spread over the time. You see, if they are going to have six, they want them spaced out.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: Then the effect would be that, fifty years hence, we should be like France, with a stationary population?—Their population, or, I should say, their birth rate, is quite as high as ours. The trouble in France is the high death rate. They are inferior to us in hygiene.

In other words, we are more successful than France is, and getting much nearer to a stationary population because the death rate cannot go on decreasing in England beyond a certain point. But the birth rate can go down to absolutely nil?—I take the view that that is not human nature. There are a great many people who like to have a number of children, and if they are free to choose, they would have as many as was necessary.

That would still be consistent with a stationary population in this country, and the question I was wanting to ask was whether Mr. Russell would regard complacently the population of this country remaining at 41 millions?—Yes, I think it would be a good thing. I think a stationary population in the world would be a good thing.

Would you say the same with Australia?—Australia is a place where there is still room for emigration

Supposing Australia goes on restraining her birth rate as she is doing now, what is to prevent the Japanese coming in in the next twenty years, owing to birth control?—The Japanese have started birth control

Well, China?—I never met an educated Chinaman who was not keen on birth control and anxious to get it well known

SIR JAMES MARCHANT The desire not to have children is among the better classes?—Yes, and among the women who want to do better work and public work

*Note on the Question of Abortion and Artificial Abortion, p 140 of the Evidence*

The contention in the "Memorandum on Birth Control" submitted to the Minister of Health, May 9, 1924, was that Dr Campbell's "Report on Maternal Mortality" suggests that cases of death from puerperal sepsis are very frequently traceable to artificial abortion, and, further, that there is probably some relation between the high and increasing maternal death rate in crowded industrial areas and the practice of artificial abortion. Cases scheduled by doctors simply as miscarriage are admitted by them, over and over again, to be almost certainly artificially caused, but for reasons of humanity they do

not make that assertion publicly in particular cases

On pp 33 and 34 of Dr Campbell's report she is quite certainly dealing with the effects of *artificial abortion*. She uses abortion here (p 33) to mean artificial abortion, and miscarriage for other accidents. The essential part of this paragraph is quoted in the Memorandum "Where the induction of artificial abortion is commonly attempted, there will be an increased risk of puerperal sepsis, and consequent danger of death either from infection directly due to the means employed, or following an incomplete abortion. Infection following abortion is comparatively seldom regarded or notified as puerperal sepsis, and its incidence is, therefore, likely to be under estimated." Dr Campbell (p 37, par 2) does not suggest that industrial employment is necessarily harmful to maternity, on the contrary, she thinks heavy housework for a large family more severe. P 38 "The more children a woman has the heavier will her household tasks become, the greater the strain upon health and strength, and the less her chance of passing through pregnancy without ill results. Heavy domestic work, including especially the household washing, is often far more fatiguing and liable to cause injury than an industrial occupation."

In two places Dr Campbell directly suggests artificial abortion as a cause of the high death

rate in the industrial (especially textile) areas.

P. 37. "It has been alleged that artificial abortion flourishes where large numbers of married women are employed in mills or factories. . . ."

Pp. 91-92. "The double strain of housework and outside employment, however, may impose too heavy a burden upon the mother, and there is reason to suppose that the temptation to procure artificial abortion, with consequent danger of sepsis, may be increased by a desire to retain employment."

The facts about maternal mortality in industrial areas are sufficiently serious to demand investigation and consideration by your committee. The following are maternal deaths per thousand births:—

Halifax (wool industry) .	1911—1914	0 23	1919—1922	7 82
(Report of the M.O.H. mentions abortion monger and drugs)				
Blackpool . . . . .	1911—1914	5 58	1919—1922	7 55
(11 out of 35 deaths due to abortion)				
Rochdale (cotton) . . . . .	1911—1914	7 21	1919—1922	7 05
Bury (cotton) . . . . .	1911—1914	6 49	1919—1922	6 43
Dewsbury (textile) . . . . .	1911—1914	8 44	1919—1922	6 34
Barnsley . . . . .	1911—1914	5 81	1919—1922	6 15
(Drug taking very prevalent.)				

Bradford (p. 34): 25 out of 51 deaths followed abortions, and out of 37 deaths from other causes at least 12 were associated with miscarriage or abortion.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

## VIII

BY THE LORD BISHOP OF GUILDFORD

I THE question of conception control raises the preliminary issue of the use of marriage, for what purpose it was ordained

(1) Is intercourse allowable when neither husband nor wife feels the desire for children or the impulse to beget them?

Dr Burge in his evidence before the Birth Rate Commission, 1913, gives an uncompromising "No" to this question. I cannot agree, because (a) Practical consequences—this would limit marital relations to five or six occasions only during the entire course of married life (b) To limit marriage relations to the single aim of begetting children is to use men and women for racial purposes only and to convert the home into a stud (c) This view seems to imply that there is something impure in the sexual relation and that the only thing that redeems it is the procreation of children

Both in the Anglican and Roman Church Marriage Services the procreation of children is placed first among the objects of marriage. But in both rooms is also found for "mutual help and comfort." There is no Divine

warrant for placing it first. It must be there, of course, to "moralise" the love of husband and wife and to link their lives with the great chain of purpose whereby "the whole creation moves," and to give them their place and responsibility in a larger life. But we may venture to doubt whether the thought of children or the desire for parenthood is normally the power which draws two hearts together.

(ii) Is it right to detach intercourse altogether from its natural sequel and prevent conception by mechanical contrivance?

It is difficult to point to any direct condemnation in Scripture or in the Rules of the Church. But it appears to be contrary to the spirit of the Christian Faith and to man's true welfare, and in regard to the Christian conscience generally there seems to be an instinctive feeling against it.

Present-day difficulties and the defects of our social system—for which all are responsible—have made the question prominent. It is urged that frequent child-bearing is harmful to the wife and ages her prematurely; the poor cannot feed large families; those of a rather higher social class cannot educate them; those still higher in the social scale cannot give them comforts they enjoyed themselves. Again, the health and moral character of husband and wife may render child-bearing dangerous to the wife—or the child may be defective or diseased. As

things are at present, the least fit in the matter of parenthood are the most prolific

II But conception control would not eliminate the fundamental causes of these and kindred evils but would rather tend to perpetuate them by —

(a) Removing certain pressing inconveniences, thus fostering a spirit of acquiescence and postponing the hope of a wise overhauling of our social system (housing, education, wages, alcohol, venereal disease—if these were attended to we should hear less about conception control)

(b) Intensifying the spirit which is responsible for these evils, i.e. the spirit of self-indulgence and materialism at work both in the well-to-do and in the poor, in the *well to do*, for it is among them that the practice chiefly prevails. A leaflet issued by the Malthusian League claims that “practically all the married people of the richer classes now use preventive methods” It is among the best able, financially and physically, to support children that artificial sterility is most frequently found (cf. the number of only sons of well-to-do parents who fell in the war) And *among the poor*, or so called “poor,” in homes where extravagance in drink, food, dress, amusements, etc., is comparatively common

Besides, we are trustees of posterity, and the conditions of true progress (as Benjamin Kidd points out) consist in the subordination



of the present and the individual to the Future and the Universal. Short-sighted concentration on present evils, visible and palpable, together with the present obsession with sex, blinds many people to the unseen and fundamental issues of life and to the mischief lurking in specious promises of immediate relief. In regard to a matter of this kind, it is impossible to avoid generalisations, but we can try to base them on our experience of human nature.

III Concerning the individual. Conception control seems to me likely to produce one or other of two apparently opposite effects, each disastrous. It will either (1) Foster a spirit of calculating sensuality. The use of contraceptives implies the deliberate isolation of one element in marriage from the rest. Of necessity, it concentrates attention on the physical act and in a certain sense may be said to destroy the sacramental character of married love—attention comes to be fixed increasingly on physical gratification as an end in itself, and the whole basis of marriage is thus materialised. It is impossible to adopt such practices without a coarsening of sensibility. I believe that any pure minded girl uncorrupted by sophistry shrinks from those methods with an instinctive repugnance. Henry Russell Andrews, senior obstetric physician to the London Hospital (quoted by Dr Mary Scharheeb, "Straight Talks to Women," p 144), writes

that his long experience has shown him that "precautions are extremely distasteful to a young wife, and although she may not speak so plainly to her husband she may tell her doctor that in her case marriage is simply legalised prostitution" We cannot *afford* to lose nowadays what has been called "the protective value of shame" These finer elements in our nature are of infinite worth and infinite delicacy. The effect on a wife may be even more injurious than repeated child-bearing—the one harms the bodily well-being, the other injures the soul

Or (ii) It may produce an opposite effect—the destruction of self-control For it removes the last bulwark, though only a prudential one, against man's natural passions It can hardly be doubted that with the disappearance of all likelihood of conception the sensual nature will be in grave danger of undue stimulation The crying need of to-day is, not birth control, but self-control And birth control is so pernicious because it implies that self-control in marriage is unnecessary and impossible And yet we expect continence from unmarried men and women It may be hard, but we expect it of them Why not the married, then, when occasion demands? It is true that their close association, perhaps their youth, the fact that the habit of intercourse has been formed in their case and without sin, renders abstinence more difficult. But

marriage is a sacrament, and I believe, when rightly received, carries with it the grace required for all its incidents—for abstinence as well as for use. To acknowledge the impossibility of self-control in marriage is an acquiescence in defeat which must needs act disastrously on the unmarried. Already the use of contraceptives among young men and girls, clerks and shop assistants and others, is alarmingly on the increase. It is of little use for married people to preach continence to the unmarried until they have set their own house in order. It is the same instinct that seeks gratification both in and outside the married state. You cannot consider it separately or assume that marriage merely gives a licence for that which was sin without it.

IV. In regard to the evil of excessive child-bearing, which is said chiefly to exist among the "working classes," the true remedy lies in teaching men of all sorts greater reverence for women—there is too little insistence on the duty and necessity of self-control in married life. Girls are told about the use of contraceptives by their married girl friends and young men hear about it from various quarters.

V. In medical circles opinion seems to be divided on the subject of contraceptives. But several eminent medical men are strongly opposed to their use and comparatively few advocate them with any enthusiasm. Those

who allow their use appear to regard them as a regrettable necessity. There is considerable support for the view that control of conception produces sterility in many cases and prevents the birth of children when desired.

VI With regard to racial eugenics, are we not in danger of self deception, claiming to know what really remains unknown, perhaps invading spheres which God has purposely left in darkness? Perhaps, if the family history of the men and women who have done most for England or the world were examined, it would be found in many cases that he or she was the fourth or fifth child of the family.

VII On these grounds I hold that the case for conception control has not been proved and that the Church must do all in her power to discountenance the practice. But I cannot condemn absolutely. I am obliged to admit that there are cases which have come to my knowledge in which I should regard it as the lesser of two evils. It is sometimes asked, "Is the thing wrong *per se*?" To this I should reply that it is very hard to say of any act that it is wrong *per se* apart from examination of motives, e.g., killing, lying, theft in some cases are held to be justifiable. Adultery alone appears to be a sin *per se*, and the like may be said of morbid vices. I do not feel that I could ever say that birth control *per se* was a sin,

and I think few could be found to say so in certain cases I could mention. I see much in life to suggest, and nothing in the Gospels to forbid the idea that there are gradations between right and wrong. (The action of Nicodemus was not the highest, but it was not condemned.) We are bound, however, to seek the highest, and in any advice I had to give I should urge that abstinence with its great self-discipline, when it is based on religious conviction shared by both partners, is the highest course to follow.

My views are chiefly gathered from the experience I had as Secretary of the Committee at the last Lambeth Conference, which dealt with these problems, from much correspondence which I received on the subject, and from frequent talks which I have had subsequently with priests whose counsel in this matter has been sought.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have read your *précis*, and now we should like to hear any particular information you have on any special points? —In regard to the first paragraph, I was not aware how far Dr. Burge's view had formed a matter of discussion. I take it his view is not at all widely shared, that practically intercourse must be confined only to those occasions when there is a deliberate desire or impulse to beget children? The second point is: "Is it right to detach intercourse altogether from its natural sequel and to prevent conception by mechanical contriv-

ance?" It seems to me that the Christian conscience emphatically rebels against the practice. I feel that we must recognise that it is an artificial state of things that has produced the problem and, further, the practice seems to me, apart from the moral question, to be anti-social in its effects. I mean by anti social character that it is the product of artificial circumstances and that the real remedy lies in addressing ourselves to the conditions of housing, etc., and to the evils which lie at the root of it.

MRS CADBURY Would you also say that some of those evils have been caused by the unrestricted size of families in the slum districts?—It is more true, I think, to regard those as the cause than the effect. The use of contraceptives seems to imply the deliberate isolation of one of the objects of marriage.

DR CARNEGIE SIMPSON Does nature admit a great number of cases of sexual intercourse, far more than for procreation?—I should agree with that, but I should also be reluctant to isolate one object completely from the others.

THE CHAIRMAN Assuming that isolation in the case of right minded married people is allowable, then the question is, What methods are allowable in order to secure it? Is it reasonable to say that mechanical methods are in a fundamental sense unnatural, and therefore wrong or is it not so much the difference of kind as degree? Are we, looking

at the matter from the purely ethical and moral point of view, justified in saying that the married act may, on occasion, be separated from the procreation of children?—Apart from the question of procreation, it is damaging to the higher uses of marriage and emphasises the lower use of it. It is for the sake of the physical gratification only that recourse is had to mechanical contrivances. I think there is an instinctive shrinking from the practice in the case of a great many people.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: Do you think there is something repugnant?—Yes, I think it is a moral repugnance.

REV. CANON SIMPSON: Can you refer that instinctive shrinking to any rational effect or any fundamental religious belief or conscientious scruple?—I can only account for it by the “inner light.”

You think perhaps 90 per cent. of the women would feel that?—I could not generalise to that extent, but I am certain the feeling exists.

MRS. CADBURY: The point is, can you definitely say it is a sin if you find that the general atmosphere of that family life is good and religious?—It is hardly possible to condemn any action as wrong without examining the motive. I can recall cases of people who have used it and have come to regard it afterwards with horror.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: What do you

say when they ask you if it is wrong?—I tell them what I think is the Church's line and what is the higher line to practise.

In the event of young married people not being able for some reason or other to support children, what would you advise them to do?—Abstinence is the only course I could recommend.

DR. CARNEGIE SIMPSON: You put two people together in the same bed, and every night you do this, and you say that grace will enable them to abstain. Is this the part of grace?—I think it does happen in more cases than we know.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: Are we to assume that families are to be allowed to increase according to nature?—I think we must teach greater self-control.

Supposing you were told that self-control, unless carried to a great extreme, would mean more children instead of less?—I should question this.

Supposing that the wife was willing to abstain and the husband was not, and there were medical reasons why they should have no children, would you then suggest to a doctor that he should give advice in regard to contraceptives?—In an extreme case of that kind, I should say the individual should be guided by the opinion of experts. There are cases in which it is the lesser evil of the two, but those are abnormal cases.

Take the case of a young man engaged to



a girl and knowing the financial difficulties, they cannot marry for two or three years unless it is secured that they cannot have any children. The alternative to this is for him to go with a prostitute. Do you think that that marriage should take place?—I think not, but I could not admit that the only alternative is prostitution. There are people who are called upon to make even greater sacrifices than this.

Would you approve of delayed parenthood, the use of contraceptive means?—I should feel that the total balance was in favour of their not marrying in this case. We must remedy these circumstances, and in the long run I believe the Church's rule is the wiser.

Where is the teaching of the Church given in regard to birth control?—There is, I think, a general consensus of opinion against it as contrary to the spirit of Christian teaching, though it is not possible to point to any definite rule.

DR. BOND. I should like to know the Bishop's feeling about the desirability or the wisdom of the Church, as a Church, issuing any pronouncement in regard to this question of birth control in general. I take it there are cases in which you would reserve judgment, but is it not true that all these cases, among the masses of people, as well as among the abnormals, ought in every case to be judged on their merits, or does the Bishop think it would be a good thing for the Church

to issue at this stage a pronouncement on the desirability of this practice of birth control?—I feel myself it is not a public statement that is required from the Church at the present moment. It is perfectly clear what the Church has been teaching all along, and really there is no reason to be ashamed of it. I think there should be private counsel rather than a public statement. There are people who are in great distress about this question, and I am not prepared to say that I would not welcome a statement of the general principles involved if it could be an agreed statement.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: You feel, then, that the Church as a Church ought to pronounce and lead the nation in every possible way on moral issues?—Certainly, so far as it can.

As regards your general attitude, would you say that inasmuch as birth control is now very widespread, therefore it is more incumbent upon us to take a higher and more rigid attitude?—Yes.

Although the people concerned may not even listen to us and certainly would refuse to follow our advice?—I think that the Church is bound to maintain the highest standard.

## IX

By B. DUNLOP, M.B.

(Vice-President of the New Generation League)

I. EVEN in the decades immediately before 1914, the world's inhabitants were only increasing their numbers at the relatively slow rate of 10, or less, per thousand a year; and from this fact, as they still had a very high birth rate, it may be inferred that they were only increasing their food supply at the rate of 10, or less, per thousand a year. Therefore, it may be taken that they will continue to suffer from food shortage until they reduce their birth rate to about 20 per thousand a year. But we know (for example, from Malthus's chapter on Norway and from the birth rates which prevailed before 1876) that if they do not practise contraception they cannot reduce their birth rate below 30 per thousand a year. Thus they have to choose between contraception and poverty. Therefore, few will accept the view that contraception is immoral.

II. The world's inhabitants had to work

very hard to increase their food supply even at the rate of only 10, or less, per thousand a year. This shows that, whatever the social system may be, two conditions are essential for the elimination of poverty—namely, small families and willing work. Until the capitalistic system has been tried with these two conditions combined, no one should say that it has failed. Small families and willing work would quickly banish poverty from any country, and we could counter the revolutionaries by proclaiming this great and most encouraging truth.

THE CHAIRMAN I am going to ask you to amplify your statement if you so desire?

DR DUNLOP I beg you will allow me first to say that some of my arguments for birth control would not be endorsed by all the officials and members of the New Generation League. There is one point in my statement which I should especially like to amplify. Many persons who are concerned about our economic and social problems urge the need for increased production and others urge the need for birth control. I feel very strongly that these two sound ideas should be combined. Man should realise the chief difficulty which besets him, it is that, on the one hand he generally can only increase his food supply very slowly, however hard he may work, and that, on the other hand, he tends to beget children very rapidly.

Unless he realises this there cannot be a satisfactory state of society. When one merely advises the wage earners to increase production, they say "You want bigger profits." But when one gives them the whole truth and advises them also to limit their families, they feel that one is in sympathy with them and really wishes to improve their conditions. Then they are readier to consider the arguments against the *ca'canny* policy. I believe that the great majority of wage-earners would soon adopt the policy of small families and willing work, and thus bring about a satisfactory and stable condition of society.

**THE CHAIRMAN** Do you consider that the world's food supply can still be greatly increased in view of the large areas of undeveloped land still existing?

**DR DUNLOP** Certainly. My point is that the world's food supply can only be increased slowly, and therefore that a low birth rate is necessary for the elimination of poverty. One has to remember, however, that part of the food supply from new areas merely offsets the reduced output from old areas whose soils have become impoverished. Large areas in Canada, Australia and elsewhere which used to produce abundant crops of wheat are ceasing to be cultivated and are returning to cattle ranches.

**SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME** Did not Malthus say that Scotland was overpopulated and

yet its population has increased greatly since then?

DR. DUNLOP: That is a misunderstanding of Malthus's principle, and a very prevalent one. His principle was that over-population is not a question of a country being unable to support any further addition of people, but is a question of pressure of population from its inhabitants trying, in effect, to increase faster than the food supply.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: What is your opinion of the statement made by Dr. John Brownlee in the *Lancet* that, as the birth rate of England and Wales has reached the required level, the time for preaching birth control has passed?

DR. DUNLOP: I most strongly disagree that the time for preaching birth control has passed. I consider it very serious that the birth rate of the poorest classes should be so much higher than that of the better-off classes. Moreover, the better-off people will not raise their birth rate until they cease to be heavily taxed to help to maintain the excessive families of the poor.

DR. C. J. BOND: What leads you to think that the better-off people would raise their birth rate if they were lightly taxed?

DR. DUNLOP: I believe that practically all married couples would like to have at least two children—one of each sex, and that wherever they do not there is something seriously wrong with the social system.

MRS. GEORGE CADBURY : Does your Society do any propaganda among the poor?

DR. DUNLOP : Yes. We issue a free Practical Tract which describes the various contraceptive methods.

## X

BY SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, K.C.B.

### I

#### THE FALL OF FERTILITY AMONG EUROPEAN RACES AND SOME OF ITS SOCIAL REACTIONS

(Summary of a paper read at the Toronto meeting of the British Association, August, 1924, and circulated for this Committee)

THE fall of fertility which began among European races, in Europe and elsewhere, forty or fifty years ago has two main characteristics; it is found almost everywhere, but its extent varies greatly from one country to another, according to differences of creed, class, occupation, and density of population. For Europe as a whole, excluding Russia, the fall in thirty years from 1881 to 1911 is in the neighbourhood of 20 per cent, but in particular countries it varies from nothing, as in Ireland, to more than 40 per cent., as in Saxony. These two characteristics of generality and diversity practically exclude any explanation of the fall other than deliberate prevention of fertilisation, or what is



commonly called "birth control." The question remains. Why did the practice of birth control begin or increase so suddenly and so generally about the year 1880? No change of economic or other conditions (such as compulsory education or public health legislation) peculiar to a few countries only would account for so general a change. On the other hand, no general change of economic conditions which could in any way increase the need for restriction of families can be traced as having occurred at the time. The year 1880 falls in the middle of a period of industrial expansion during which prosperity and the standard of living rose continuously in most if not all of the countries concerned. They certainly did so in Britain. It must be inferred that the sudden development of birth control at that particular date was due, not to any increase in the need for control, but to improvements in the means of control, to invention and exploitation of new powers over nature, like those given by chloroform or gunpowder, but unlike them in being driven underground by public opinion and the law. The fact that birth control developed, not when or because it was particularly needed, but when and because the means of control happened to be improved, *i. e.*, as the result of an underground invention, makes it all the more important to study scientifically and discuss frankly all the possible effects of control under

varying conditions, on health, on numbers, on the quality of population, and on social institutions. Here no such complete survey can be attempted. I propose indeed to say nothing of the large and obvious questions of over-population, race suicide, or eugenics, but to call attention simply to two special points, less obvious but perhaps not less important.

The first is the change in the social structure involved in passing from a stage of growing to one of stationary population. The latter stage, as Professor Bowley has shown, is well within sight in Britain to day. The number of children born in England and Wales was about 750,000 in 1923 as compared with 950,000 in 1903, a fall of 200,000, allowing for reduced mortality, this means that, apart from increases in the school age, the total school population will be materially less than in the past, the problem of providing educational facilities will be lightened. On the other hand, a stationary population has necessarily a larger proportion of old people than a growing one, this will be accentuated fifteen to twenty years hence, when the large generation dating from the high birth rates of the seventies come to old age. The problem of providing for age by pensions will be accentuated. The effect on public opinion and policy of a relative increase of the higher age groups, with age's inevitable conservatism, may also be noteworthy.

The second point is the possible effect of birth control on the institutions of marriage and the family. The fall of the birth rate has been accompanied in many, though not all, countries by a fall in the marriage rate, equally sudden and equally inexplicable by economic change. The agreement of date and the analysis of certain Dutch statistics suggest the same cause in both phenomena, i.e., that the power of birth control in some countries at least (including Britain and Holland) has been used, and is being used, to postpone or avoid marriage rather than to encourage it. The whole structure of society may be transformed.

The years about 1880 are an epoch in human history as important as those which witnessed the introduction of gunpowder or the printing press. Mankind, here as elsewhere, appears as an immortal Frankenstein perpetually faced with the problem of controlling his own inventions and creations. The conclusions are :—

1. The revolutionary fall of human fertility in Europe since 1880 is due mainly, if not wholly, to deliberate prevention.

2. The sudden spread of the practice of prevention after 1880 cannot be connected with any change of economic conditions increasing the need for restricting families and must be attributed to invention of more effective means of prevention.

3. Apart from the direct effects in numbers and quality of population, important effects on social structure are to be anticipated through the change from a growing to a stationary population in Britain and elsewhere and through the decrease of marriages, which is probably a result of the same causes.

## II

### SUMMARY OF SPEECH BY SIR WILLIAM BRVERIDGE

(Summary of Speech at Eugenic Educational  
Society Meeting, August 14th, 1924)

There is no justification for the exaggerated pessimism of some eugenic propagandists in Britain. Only an insignificant proportion of the unemployed are unemployable. There is, so far as I know, no solid evidence of an increase in the number of those who can be described as unfit. There is no evidence of a decline in the average physique and health of the people in spite of growing urbanisation, the evidence from the lengthening expectation of life and the decline of infant mortality is all the other way. Yet there are disquieting features in our society, from which we are bound to infer, even if we cannot yet observe, a tendency to deterioration in the stock. Those classes in each generation which

by economic standards are most valuable to the community in the present do on the whole contribute less than their fair share to the next generation; those which are least valuable contribute more than their share. The disproportion is not great. The conclusion formerly stated by Professor Karl Pearson, that 25 per cent. of one generation produces 50 per cent. of the next generation, is not supported by the detailed examination of fertility made in the census of 1911. The most fertile 25 per cent. of the population are found, in fact, to produce, not 50 per cent., but about 30 per cent. of the next generation; this most fertile 25 per cent. includes, with unskilled labourers, also two classes—miners and agricultural labourers—who, whatever their economic value or intellectual ability, are certainly not deficient in physique.

The disproportion in the production of each generation is thus a small one. But, large or small, it is a disproportion in the wrong direction—dysgenic, not eugenic. The unskilled workmen are more fertile than the skilled, the skilled workmen than the professional men, teachers, doctors, civil servants, lawyers and the like; this excess of fertility is only partially neutralised by higher death rates; the man of lower economic class who by exceptional ability rises into a higher class at the same time takes his inheritance of ability with him into a region where it has

a smaller chance of perpetuation. Moreover, the dysgenic tendency is new or at least has increased materially in the last fifty years, the gap between the classes in respect of fertility has been widened since the introduction of birth control, in this respect we are doing worse than former generations.

Granted the evil, can any practical measures, particularly from the economic side, be suggested as likely to improve the position? Consider the origins of the dysgenic tendency. It arises, among other things, from the facts (1) that reproduction in Britain and many other countries is coming more and more under deliberate control, i.e., is a function, among other things, of knowledge and of forethought. (2) That the economic system is such as to discourage reproduction by those who have knowledge and exercise forethought. The economic system makes no specific provision for the economic burdens of bringing up the next generation. They have to be met in the normal case from the earnings of a single male wage earner in each household, the income of each household is practically the same, whatever the number of persons to be supported out of it. The effects of this arrangement have been examined in a remarkable book, "The Disinherited Family," by Miss Eleanor Rathbone, published this year, she makes an unanswerable case for some system of family endowment, i.e., for distributing the total product of industry

each year not wholly either as wages or profits or interests, but in part also as payments for bringing up the next generation. The case for this is not merely or mainly a eugenic one, but the proposal has a direct bearing on the eugenic problem. It is a proposal which, apart from any general scheme, might well be considered in relation to particular classes such as teachers in schools and in universities or civil servants.

If we want to check the present dysgenic tendency in Britain, it seems likely that we shall in the near future have on the one hand to reconsider the official attitude towards birth control and on the other to supplement the wage system by a scheme of family allowances.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are grateful to Sir William for coming here to-day and drawing our attention to an aspect of things which has not been dealt with to any large extent by other witnesses. If there are any points you desire to elaborate or emphasise, I hope you will do so?—Perhaps you will allow me to begin by saying that this memorandum I sent round was not prepared for this Commission. It is simply the summaries of two speeches I made in Canada, one at the British Association meeting and the other at a Eugenics Society meeting. In some respects, they are overlapping. Perhaps you will allow me to deal under four heads with the conclusions I want to put before you. The first

is the conclusion which I imagine you have all come to already, that the revolutionary fall in the fertility of the European races since 1880 is due mainly to deliberate birth control. I think one can infer that simply from the outside, from the statistics of what has happened, without any direct evidence of the use of preventive measures. The second is that great development of birth control in 1880 cannot be attributed to the sudden development about that time of any additional increased need for control. You cannot bring the vital statistics of that time into relation with any economic statistics. You cannot say birth control came then because it was more needed. You must say that birth control came then because the means of birth control were perfected and improved. Birth control came by accident because it was invented, and not because it was needed. The third heading deals with the economic effects of the coming of birth control in this country. The first is that it has already proceeded so far that we are in sight of the possibility of a stationary population in Great Britain in about twenty years or so. The possibility may not be realised, but it is a real one. That is to say that the population would not be in a position to furnish Canada, Australia, and the Dominions with the former number of emigrants. Moreover, a stationary population always has a larger number of older people than when it is



growing. In 1941 the percentage of men and women over sixty-five in Great Britain will be about 9 per cent. of the total population, whereas in 1911 we only had 5 per cent. of the population over sixty-five. That has a very important bearing on the finances of social measures, such as pensions and the like. Then, still under this third heading, I think there is a definite though slight dysgenic tendency because there is a slight tendency for the reproduction of the stock from the worse stock and not the better stock. And then, still under this third heading, another effect is that, while I would not say this with any certainty, the evidence points to the connecting of the fall in fertility with the fall in the marriage rate. You will no doubt remember that when birth control propaganda began in the 'seventies and 'eighties a good many of its supporters advocated birth control as a means of enabling people to marry young and not have children until they wanted them. In that event, birth control might have been accompanied by an increase in marriages, but actually it has been accompanied by a fall of the marriage rate. I have some investigations particularly of the Dutch statistics which seem to suggest that in so far as the greater power of birth control has had any effect on marriages, it has made people dispense with marriage rather than marry more readily because they could avoid having children. That is not a

certain conclusion (because, among other things, marriages do not show the same fall in all countries), but that is the direction in which the evidence I have got here points. Then under my fourth heading, as to policy, I am not prepared as yet to commit myself to any policy in this matter, but so far as I have considered it, I am not opposed to birth control as such and in all circumstances. From the point of view of eugenics, I believe that we may ultimately be driven to recognise control of births as legitimate, letting information about it percolate to all classes, and, on the other hand, we shall be driven to some plan of family endowment for those who wish to have more children but feel that they cannot afford it without spoiling the chances of those they have. I believe that that is the direction in which we shall have to move.

THE CHAIRMAN. Would not Sir William think that our present situation would eventually mean a stationary population in about twenty years' time and that that would be a rather alarming state of affairs? I should have thought his first three points rather led to a different conclusion than the fourth?—No, I do not think they do. In this country if we only have the same number of people as at present, I think we have got quite enough. I do not mean that we could not support more but I think we have quite enough, certainly I am not prepared to

say that there are 'positive' grounds for desiring more in this country. When I speak of a stationary population as a possibility in this country I do not mean that the births will not exceed the deaths; I allow for some emigration. I see also no reason for any birth control in Canada; that is a place where it does not seem to be justified by anything in particular.

DR. BOND: Or Australia?—Or Australia. Australia is the only country in the world where a fall in fertility has been checked and gone back the other way, showing an actual rise from 1900 to 1910. I do not know whether any of you have discovered why. I do not know why.

THE CHAIRMAN: Has there been a corresponding increase in the Roman Catholic population; if so that might have a definite bearing upon it?—Yes. May I add that I don't see how you can stop birth control? It has far too firm a hold, and I do not therefore want it to apply only to the better stocks; I do not want to prevent it from percolating to the worse stocks.

SIR JAMES MARCHANT: Do you think the time will come when we shall have too many people on this island to feed?—I can't say as to that; that is an economic question (of relative efficiency in production as compared with other nations) and not a question simply of births and deaths. The growing competition of other nations makes it doubt-

ful whether it would be wise for us to have a much larger population in these islands.

But in fifty years' time we shall have several millions more than now?—Nobody can say whether we can afford that or not; it all depends on the relative efficiency of our production.

MRS. CLAY: Does that not mean on our number of workers?—No, not on the number of them; on how much each produces per head. I mean by efficiency the efficiency per head. Of course, it is true up to a certain point that the more people you have in the country, the more efficient each one is.

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME: You base your advocacy of contraceptives on the dysgenic position at the present time?—I am not an advocate but acquiescent; I should not have thought it was doubtful that there was a definite dysgenic tendency.

The really inferior lot are the minute proportion of the total population?—The really unfit are minute; I personally am not troubled about the breeding of the unfit, as I think they kill themselves out. It is the breeding of the less fit that troubles me. I would not myself try to prevent the poorer classes from learning methods of prevention providing they are medically satisfactory.

Is there any hope of them being adopted by the very people we wish them to be adopted by?—I do not think that they would be adopted by the people who have got to

the stage of the criminal or the beggar; but there are few people who have got to that stage.

Lady Barratt, who gave evidence here, suggested to us that under the conditions these poorer people live, it would be almost impracticable for them to adopt efficiency in these methods?—On that side I have no knowledge and no views; my proviso that the methods must be medically satisfactory is fundamental.

THE CHAIRMAN: I rather gather from what Sir William has told us that from the national point of view at the moment, it is more important, on balance, to encourage the better stocks to breed than to discourage the worst stocks from breeding?—That puts my position exactly. In regard to the older people, you must bear in mind that the people past work are simply consuming; they are not producing.

DR. BOND: But it looks as if the age at which work goes on has rather extended?—To some extent that is happening, but I think the total length of life is lengthening more than the working life. Every year as a population passes from the stage of growth towards the stationary stage, you get a larger proportion of older people, and therefore you are per head producing less necessarily, and therefore you are poorer. There is nothing to be done except to be very careful in your schemes for old age pensions.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is a known fact that

there were inventions of methods of birth control which rather quickly became widespread about 1884?—I am prepared to infer that without direct observation It is the only possible inference from the course of birth rates in different countries and classes

### LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- The Declining Birth Rate* Being the First Report and Evidence of the National Birth Rate Commission 1916
- Problems of Population and Parenthood* Being the Second Report of the Commission and Evidence 1920
- Venereal Disease* Being the Third Report of the Commission 1921
- Youth and the Race* The Development and Education of Young Citizens for Worthy Parenthood Being the Fourth Report of the National Birth Rate Commission 1924
- Birth Rate and Empire* By Sir James Marchant
- The Master Problem* By Sir James Marchant
- The Control of Parenthood* Edited by Sir James Marchant
- The Claims of the Coming Generation* Essays edited by Sir James Marchant
- The Cinema Its Present Position and Future Possibilities* Being the first Report and Chief Evidence taken by the Cinema Commission of Enquiry
- The Cinema in Education* A Psychological Investigation Being the Second Report of the Cinema Commission of Enquiry 1925

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